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July  
1972  
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## **Exploits of 'The New Adventurers'**

BY JAMES RIDGEWAY

**THE NEW ADVENTURERS.** By the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey in close association with the advertising firm of McCaffrey and McCall, Inc. Appearing in Saturday Review, The New Yorker, US News & World Report, Vista, Atlantic, Harper's, Scientific American, Natural History, On The Sound, On The Shore, Time, Sports Illustrated, Newsweek, World Review, National Geographic and Foreign Affairs. 8 pages.

"The New Adventurers," for those who may have missed their dramatic debut in recent weeks, are "the men who go to sea today in search of oil and gas." And a more heroic breed would be hard to find. Indeed, they are nothing less than "the descendants of the fishermen, traders and explorers who centuries ago ventured upon the unknown for daily sustenance, wealth or from sheer curiosity." Down to the sea they go "to live with danger. A severe storm can force them to seek safety on shore. An oil or gas blowout can in seconds create an inferno of fire. Such disasters are infrequent but they happen—even though the most stringent safeguards are taken to avoid them."

Corporate advertisers, of course, constantly deal out such buncombe. But Esso's eight-page bit of four-color slickery, handsomely laid out like a magazine article, is a classic of the genre. It opens with a full-page shot of what is doubtless the most benign offshore drilling platform in captivity—"a massive steel structure that seems almost delicate with its lattice of metalwork" silhouetted in a sunset that streaks the ocean gold. On the inside pages the water is so blue you want to drink it, especially in the shot of all the fish that "thrive in great abundance and variety among the platform legs, which act as artificial reefs." For the scientifically inclined, there is a chart—supplied by the industry-dominated National Petroleum Council—showing how we might meet our 1985 energy needs; drawings of four types of drilling platforms, and a full-page cross section of a drill heading through water and earth toward paydirt. And the final page offers a shot of a pristine, palm-fringed beach in Santa Barbara. "In 1969," reads the caption, "a blowout caused a terrible, but temporary, blight. Since the clean-up, scientists have found no evidence of lasting damage to

sea growth, marine life or the beautiful beaches."

Esso's pitch in the copy that accompanies all this artwork is that even though offshore drilling is much more expensive than on land, oil companies must push on with the search for oil and gas in subsea territories surrounding the continental United States so that the industry can meet the increasing public demand for petroleum products. Why, asks Esso, does the industry persist in its underwater search? And Esso replies:

First of all, there's the matter of supply and demand. Beyond that are vital considerations of continued economic growth and security of supply. Right now, oil and gas provide three-quarters of America's energy requirements. Meanwhile, the demand for energy continues to increase.

Every day the United States consumes 650 million gallons of petroleum and over 50 billion cubic feet of natural gas. This consumption is growing so fast that the United States is expected to use as much petroleum and natural gas in the next fifteen years as it has during the entire 113 years of the oil industry's existence.

In the case of natural gas, this estimate is conservative—only because supplies are severely limited. Gas is such a clean, convenient fuel that its use would grow much faster if it were readily available. In the U.S. we are increasingly dependent on offshore areas for natural gas—a fuel which is becoming critically scarce. Overseas imports are not the entire answer, since gas is difficult and expensive to transport in anything other than pipelines.

The Government shares this quasi-hysteria over the "gas shortage." Yet, there never has been any sort of independent, impartial survey of the nation's natural gas reserves—the amount of gas located below the ground. Although future supplies are believed to lie on the outer continental shelf, within Federal jurisdiction, the Government has refused

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# (MORE)

*Editor*  
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*Assistant Editor*  
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*Business Manager*  
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# (HELLBOX)

Rosebuds to Joe Eszterhas for his stunning portrait of Harrisonville, Mo. (Rolling Stone, July 6), a hamlet of 4,700 forgotten Americans 40 miles southeast of Kansas City where, late on Friday afternoon, April 21, Charles "Ootney" Simpson shot and killed three men (two of them policemen), wounded three others and then blew his head off with an M-1 rifle. "Charles Ootney Simpson's fierce assault on the town square," writes Eszterhas, "was the final escalation of a guerilla war of raw nerve and icy glares. It was fought for control of a seemingly insignificant logistical area: courthouse steps, shrubbery encircling it, and sidewalks facing its entrances on Wall and Pearl Streets. To understand the claustrophobic architecture of the square itself and its place in Harrisonville's rustic-schizoid tradition."

In 12,000 words vivid in detail and rich with perception, the author describes the square and those who populate it. "They wore their hair long and untrimmed and grew chinbound moustaches and billowing beards," he writes of the young who had taken over the square from the local drunks. "They wore all manner of beegum straw hats and crop-duster clothes—always bluejeans and a lot of Army jackets, engineer's boots, and \$2 teeny shoes . . . They played riotous Frisbee in the middle of the street and collected wilted flowers in back of Vann's Florist Shop and decked themselves out with dead roses and carnations. They wore 'love crosses' around their necks from which Jesus' body had been blasphemously ripped off."

One of these "townie kids" was Ootney Simpson, a 24-year-old high school dropout who loved Thoreau and had lived in recent weeks with the dream of buying 12 acres of barren land with the \$1,500 that was his bank account. But the farmer who had agreed to sell him this rock-strewn Walden decided in the end that he didn't want a hippie to have it. "That broke Ootney's back," said his friend Rise Risner. Simpson withdrew the \$1,500 anyway and took it down to the town jail and bailed out Rise and seven other comrades who had been arrested for "disturbing the peace" as they were planning to protest the war in Vietnam on April 22. The town elders, who had invited several hundred firefighters in from all over Missouri for a parade that day (big, red engines, too), were determined to sweep their embarrassing progeny out of sight. But Simpson and his bailed-out friends were now bent on holding their demonstration. Neither the parade nor the protest took place. For before the sun had set, Charlie Simpson had fired forty rounds into the square.

There is much more, of course, to "Charlie Simpson's Apocalypse," and nothing short of reading it does it justice. But the history of the author provides an unhappily instructive footnote. Joe Eszterhas used to work for the *Cleveland Plain-Dealer*. He was a feisty and difficult employee and was ultimately fired for writing critically about the newspaper in *Evergreen Review* (MORE—November, 1971). Talent often is feisty and difficult, though, and the inability of the *Plain-Dealer* to find room for a "maverick" like Eszterhas typifies the constricted mentality that fetters so much of the established media. Like the townspeople of Harrisonville, the press—daily newspapers and nightly news shows in particular—is committed to hopelessly bankrupt formulas that simply get it through each day. Joe Eszterhas' piece of reporting illuminates the Heartland brilliantly, yet most editors and publishers would not touch it or him, preferring the watery gruel of their safe "employees" as they watch the good ones leave.

## ITT's Picnic

Despite the steady rain that fell all afternoon, some 350 persons turned out June 18 for the annual International Telephone & Telegraph Corporation picnic—275 of them financial writers, assorted other journalists and their families. Held in the country club setting of ITT's Defense Space Group installation at Nutley, N.J., the event was a freeloaders' spectacular. Lunch, under a huge green-and-white striped tent, featured hot dogs, hamburgers, steamers, cold clams and mugs of beer. Dinner (in the main executive dining room for mom and dad and in the cafeteria for junior) included steak, corn on the cob, tomatoes and apple pie with cheese.

The swimming pool was off limits because of the rain and the softball game had to be called, too. But ITT's alert public relations team saved the day for the kids with movies, a pair of clown-magicians and a profusion of giftlets. Indeed, *petit largesse* was the order of the day. Besides frisbees for the offspring, each father (it was Father's Day) received a three-piece barbecue set. And at dinner, a dozen door prizes were raffled off. Clare Reckert, a financial writer with *The New York Times*, won a portable television set. Ted Ward, financial editor of *The*

### 1. Exploits of 'The New Adventurers'

by James Ridgeway

James Ridgeway, an editor of *Ramparts*, is completing a book on the energy business to be published this fall by Dutton under the title, *The Last Play*.

### 3. The Annual Room 9 Follies

by Terry Pristin

Terry Pristin is assistant editor of (MORE).

### 6. Fighting Over The Phoenix

by Bill Kovach

Bill Kovach covers New England for *The New York Times*.

### 8. Why We Can't Say B--shit

by Ethel Reed Strainchamps

Ethel Strainchamps is a free-lance writer and editor who specializes in language usage.

### 11. Tom Wolfe and his Dirigible

An edited version of the panel discussion on the new journalism that took place at the A.J. Liebling Counter-Convention. Besides Tom Wolfe, the participants were Gay Talese, Gail Sheehy, Renata Adler, Calvin Trillin, Pauline Kael and Benjamin DeMott.

### 12. The Big Apple

Illustrations: Jerry Zimmerman, page 1; Marty Norman, page 5; David Omar White, page 7; Jill Krementz (photos), page 15.

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APPLICATION TO MAIL AT SECOND-CLASS POSTAGE RATES IS PENDING AT NEW YORK, N.Y.

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# The Annual Room 9 Follies

BY TERRY PRISTIN

*The Inner Circle parade passing by  
For fifty years each Spring Saturday's our night  
Political pros we've made cry  
From Jimmy Walker's day we've been a de-light*

*Had Governor Smith sit out front  
And FDR, Jimmy Farley in our life*

*Ribbed the best of them  
Teased the rest of them  
Made a few wish they could die*

*Now we're gonna go again  
Show after show again  
We're gonna break your hearts  
For fifty more and then—  
Inner Circle parade passing by  
—To the tune of "Before the Parade Passes By"*

Joe Schoener, affectionately known as "Schroeder" in the New York City Hall press room, has worked for The Associated Press since 1942. He is a much-respected and good-natured man, but when I interviewed him in Room 9, as the press room is called, he was still fuming over a column by Pete Hamill some weeks earlier in the *New York Post*. It was an attack on the Inner Circle, an organization of "past and present political reporters," of which Schoener is an officer. What particularly infuriated him was Hamill's statement that, "most of the journalists I know think of the Inner Circle with amused contempt." "Journalists," scoffed Schoener. "Journalists! In all the years that I've been working, nobody's ever referred to himself as a 'journalist.' If somebody walked into this room and said he was a 'journalist,' he'd be laughed right out of here."

Like Schoener, the Room 9 clique is anything but pretentious, and it recalls an era when few newspapermen would have dreamed of acting self-important about their Professional Role. While the new breed of journalist holds forth in panel discussions of the media or basks under the cameras of the "Dick Cavett Show," the denizens of Room 9 sit behind vintage typewriters, filing routine budget stories and gossiping to pass the time between City Council meetings. The atmosphere is reminiscent of the days when city rooms were gin mills with editors, that Hechtian time when it was fairly easy to buy yourself a reporter and when the only story worth getting excited about was a scoop on a natural disaster or a sensational crime. Nothing exemplifies that fire-engines-and-cops style as much as New York's counterpart of Washington's Gridiron or Albany's Legislative Correspondents Association (LCA)—the Inner Circle. Its very name suggests the kind of journalism where, in the words of one non-member, "the competition is not in what you write but what you know." It is the City Hall fraternity, and as another political reporter told me, with what later seemed to be only a touch of hyperbole, "In Room 9, there is a total infatuation with the Inner Circle, to the exclusion of almost everything else."

The *esprit de corps* persists, but the Inner Circle has fallen upon hard times. While it was once considered an innocuous club controlled by city hall fixtures who enjoy getting tight together, its image during the past year has been badly tarnished by unfavorable publicity. It has been criticized for excluding women and for permitting city contractors to do favors for city officials. Not the least of its problems has resulted from the brutal incident at the 50th anniversary dinner April 15, when several protestors from the Gay Activists Alliance were beaten up by Inner Circle guests, one of whom, it is alleged, was Michael Maye, the head of the Uniformed Firefighters Association (see box, page 4).

The Inner Circle exists for the sole purpose of producing an annual \$100-a-plate musical extravaganza at the New York Hilton, attended by most of the city's political VIPs. Like its predecessors, this year's production, "The Golden Touch," featured such show-stoppers as the "Board of Estimate" singing "You've gotta have cash" to that chestnut from "Damn Yankees," and Lindsay, as portrayed by Eddie O'Neill of the

*Daily News*, singing "Scandals keep breakin' round my head" to another familiar melody. In between the songs, the audience is treated to such one-liners as:

Whitman Knapp (chairman of the commission that investigated police corruption): What's a policeman doing with a fireman's coat on?

Police Commissioner Patrick Murphy: It's got bigger pockets.

I have never witnessed one of these spectacles. I am told, however, that each year the Inner Circle seems more intent on outdoing Busby Berkeley, so that the cost of putting on what Schoener calls "a Broadway show that folds after one night" has become astronomical. Which partially explains how an organization that collects \$100 for each of nearly 1,000 guests can be on the verge of bankruptcy. The bookkeeping for the 1972 production is not yet in order, but Inner Circle treasurer Maurice (Mickey) Carroll of the *Times* estimates that some \$53,000 out of the total take of \$94,000 will go to the Hilton, an increase of nearly \$8,000 over last year. A substantial portion of the bill covers the 20-odd rehearsals held at the hotel, where the tab, most of it for liquor, ran between \$500 and \$600 a night. Additional large sums—and these are very rough figures—were spent on the musical and choral director (\$11,000), scenery (\$5,000), costumes (\$5,000-6,000), the program cartoonist (\$2,000), etc. Printing costs came to \$7,000, more than double the figure for last year, partly because of the elaborate golden anniversary program.

For some time now, the Inner Circle has contributed several thousand dollars a year to charitable causes—special schools, hospitals, old-age homes and the like—selected by the members. Last year, it gave away slightly more than \$10,000. To match that figure this year, it will have to dip into a special reserve fund established for such times of adversity. Joe Famm, a WABC radio newsman and current president of the Inner Circle, was the only club member I talked to who denied there were any fiscal difficulties. Understandably, since he is the man held responsible for them.

Famm, who used to work for the *Daily Mirror*, talks and dresses like the kind of guy who might be more at home in a Cadillac showroom than in the dingy confines of Room 9. (As a mark of his panache, his desk sports a gold phone.) His flamboyant and extravagant behavior since he attained office (the job lasts a year) has sparked considerable animosity. First, he attempted to replace the group's musical and choral director with one of his friends, a move that prompted Carroll to resign temporarily from the writing committee. Subsequently, Famm hired a choreographer, a curious decision since there is no dancing in the show. This choreographer's role, says Famm, was "to get the guys to be more human on stage." The cost: about \$1,000. He also irritated several members by secretly deciding to put on his own act after the first intermission—a buck-and-wing routine with a buxom showgirl—paid out of own pocket, he insists.

The Inner Circle president attributes some of his money problems to the "tripled" cost of goods and services, which another club member told me was "nonsense." ("These stagehands," Famm complains, "they pretend they don't speak English, but if they see the color green, they move like lightning.") Mostly, though, he blames the gay activists for delaying the final curtain past midnight and thereby increasing the musicians' fees by \$2,500, money taken "out of the mouths of charity." It appears, however, that the demonstration and its violent aftermath took up less time than Famm's own *tour de force*. Besides, the argument seems absurd in light of the fact that Famm thought nothing of renting draperies for \$1,500 nor of ordering a particularly lavish menu replete with *coquilles aux fruits de mer* and other delicacies like imported cheese, which alone seems to have hiked up the hotel bill considerably. (The Hilton management refused to supply any figures.)

Reviews of the Inner Circle productions range from a-good-time-was-had-by-all to haughty disdain. One astute political hand was genuinely enthusiastic about all the "inside" humor while another told me he could think of few politicians who enjoyed the show. "For every joke that works, you have to suffer through 25 that don't," said former Deputy Mayor Richard Aurelio, who also had to endure a song about the dawning of the Age of Aurelio ("Ask those who really know"). Despite some unfavorable notices, I could find little to indicate that—as is often charged—the pols are shaken down by Inner Circle members to buy tickets. They're expected to attend, but then again, it's more or less their kind of evening.

As political dinners go, this one ranks as one of the least dreary, and furthermore, there is the added fillip of a song-and-dance act by Mayor Lindsay, the butt of most of the jokes in the show itself. Accompanied by three Broadway performers, the Mayor this year keyed his slick routine—as always, the highlight of the evening—to his withdrawal from the Presidential race, with lines written by his press office and a song provided by Sheldon Harnick and Jerry Bock ("Fiddler on the Roof").

Some of the dignitaries, the Mayor of course included, have the privilege of attending a pre-dinner reception in the Hilton's baroque five-room Presidential suite which the current Inner Circle chief occupies for the weekend of the affair (the other club officers also indulge themselves with lesser suites) or the by-invitation-only cast party immediately following the show. Some 20 other bashes are thrown in Hilton rooms and suites that night. Among the hosts: the *News* (the *Times* holds a party in Albany at the LCA fete), Con Edison and just about every important political organization.

The guest list for the dinner includes the name of nearly everyone in the city's power structure. (It is, however, noticeably short on

Rockefellers, except for the Governor; but even he failed to show at the last minute.) Builders, bankers, labor leaders and lawyers get a chance to schmooze with congressmen, legislators, commissioners, councilmen, political functionaries and newspaper editors. Frank Hogan, district attorney for New York, dined with Supreme Court judges Harold Birns and Joseph Sarafite and Criminal Court judges Jerome Kidder and Aloysous Melia. Three judges (as well as city [tax] collector Frederic Rice) also graced the table of Arthur Ratner, developer of the Flatlands Industrial Park. (One of them, incidentally, was William Shea, the judge presiding in the Maye case.) Some tables were bought by corporations, among them Mobil Oil and Con Edison. The purchase of a table affords a cozy opportunity for supposed professional adversaries to get together. For example, three *Times* business reporters (including banking specialist H. Erich Heinemann) were guests of the Bowery Savings Bank, the largest savings bank in the nation. Sitting with them were the bank's president, John W. Larsen, and Thomas Zumbo, the United Press International's New York bureau chief. The president of the real estate industry-sponsored Rent Stabilization Association played host to one of the public's

## Entr'acte: 'The Golden Gloves'

As Inner Circle members were preparing to regale their distinguished audience with the third and final act of "The Golden Touch," some 25 members of the Gay Activists Alliance (GAA) arrived at the Hilton to protest the media's handling of homosexual news. And they also wanted to complain about some insulting lines they had heard were in the show. The objectionable repartee went as follows:

Councilman Michael DeMarco: I'm looking for the guy who introduced the gay liberation bill [a civil rights bill for homosexuals that DeMarco had staunchly opposed].

Councilman Thomas Cuite: Kiss me, and I'll tell you.

While some of the gay activists were distributing flyers to guests eating dessert in the ballroom, several went backstage where one of them made a short speech and was restrained by men he thinks were hotel employees. All of the Inner Circle members I talked to were in the process of changing costumes or applying make-up during the intermission, but some of them did see police removing demonstrators from the backstage area. None of them managed to witness any of the scuffling GAA members allege took place there, although one reporter, George Douris of the *Long Island Press*, said he was bitten on the arm by a gay activist.

Far from the view of Inner Circle members was the escalator area to which police were escorting the demonstrators. Three city officials told the press—and later a grand jury—that they saw youths being attacked by tuxedoed guests, among them, Michael Maye, president of the Uniformed Firefighters Association and a former national Golden Gloves heavyweight champion. One of the three, John Scanlon, assistant administrator of the city's Economic Development Administration, said he observed Maye come "bounding down the escalator like Superman." According to Scanlon, Maye pounded on one young man being held by a policeman and then began "grinding his heel" into the groin of another. Two other city officials said they saw the union leader collar a demonstrator and scream at him inside the ballroom. One of these witnesses said he then saw Maye head outside, presumably in the direction of the escalators.

The following day, the *Sunday News* carried a brief item noting that the Inner Circle show had "played to a glittering, laughing-room-only audience." No mention of the incident, despite the fact that several *News* editors had attended the dinner. The story, which included the erroneous information that Governor Rockefeller was present, had been written the Friday before. (The "advance" story, according to Eddie O'Neill, author of this particular sample, is a "tried and true facet of journalism.")

Late editions of the *Sunday Times* mentioned the GAA disruption in a one-graf insert based on an AP dispatch received at about 1:00 a.m. Steven Weisman, one of the two persons covering the desk at the time, says that none of the executives attending the affair—including metropolitan editor Arthur Gelb—called the office. An hour later, Weisman received a call from Manhattan Deputy Borough President Leonard Cohen, who said he had witnessed the Maye attack. Weisman left the desk a note suggesting that the charge be checked out. Nothing happened. (Gelb said he was unaware of the disturbance.)

The allegations finally did appear in print Monday—in a column by Pete Hamill in the *Post*, which doesn't publish Sunday. Hamill's

emotional account was followed up in the *Post* on two subsequent days by lengthy and meticulous reports written by Judith Michaelson and prominently displayed on page two. Later *Post* stories have also been given good play. The *Times* and the *News* didn't publish stories until April 19, four days after the incident and the day after the GAA filed charges against Maye and other unidentified assailants. Neither story mentioned the witnesses interviewed by Michaelson.

On May 22, a Manhattan grand jury charged Maye with harassment, saying he had "struck, shoved and kicked" a member of the GAA. Harassment is a "violation," not a crime, and like similar offenses such as speeding and disorderly conduct, it carries a maximum penalty of 15 days. Several of the witnesses before the grand jury criticized its failure to charge Maye with assault. As (MORE) went to press, however, the Maye trial was beginning, the grand jury having rejected a request for a superseding indictment based on new photographic evidence introduced by Morty Manford, the only GAA member to appear before the grand jury. The other gay activists have refused to testify after being told they would have to sign waivers of immunity, thus leaving themselves open to the possibility that incriminating statements could be used against them. This, they maintain, means that in effect they were being treated like suspects. The grand jury has already charged one GAA member with trespassing. Among the more curious aspects of the case has been the District Attorney's failure to provide witnesses with pictures of some of the other persons mentioned as possible assailants. Emily Goodman, attorney for the GAA, calls this omission "absurd." The gays have also charged that positive identification could have been made if police had allowed them to return to the ballroom after the beatings.

While the Inner Circle cannot be held accountable for the bellicose decorum of its guests, it has come under attack for its reaction to the GAA incident. Instead of repudiating the violence, several Inner Circle members said they thought their organization should have taken action against the demonstrators. "We felt our civil rights were violated," Inner Circle president Joe Famm told the *Times*. He described the disruption to me as "the most disgraceful performance I have ever witnessed in my life." Incidentally, Famm was the only non-GAA member I talked to who saw a double entendre in one of Mayor Lindsay's lines: "I've had more trouble with Queens than any politician since Henry VIII." Says Famm: "That drew the biggest laugh of the whole evening. If anything, they should have gone after the Mayor."

Not surprisingly, the Inner Circle clique is miffed about all the publicity the incident brought to their hitherto low-profile fraternity. One of the witnesses to the Maye episode, David Grant, public affairs director for the city's Housing and Development Administration, said he got "chewed out badly by one of the Inner Circle members" for talking to the *Post*. Reporter Joe Kahn got a how-could-you response from the Room 9 crowd after his *Post* stories appeared. The flak is coming from both sides—from those who feel the Maye incident epitomized the reactionary Room 9 mentality, and from others who think the organization should have publicly risen to Maye's defense. One of the latter is Raymond Gimmer, head of the Uniformed Fire Officers Association. "This was like it was your wedding or something and these guys came breaking in," Gimmer explained to the *Post*. "I'm very disappointed," he added. "We've bought a \$1,000 table each year, but we're not going to anymore."

T.P.



representatives on the city Conciliation Appeals Board, which is supposed to adjudicate complaints concerning the rent laws. For the newspapers, the gala affords an occasion to entertain a few prominent advertisers. At one of the *Times'* tables, top executives from department stores like B. Altman's and Sak's sat with the paper's advertising brass, alongside of business page editor Thomas Mullaney and reporter Isadore Barmash, who covers the retail industry.

**T**here are no membership dues for the Inner Circle, nor is there a mahogany-paneled club facility. The clubroom is Room 9, where the walls are appropriately adorned with framed program covers. To become a member, one must be male (of which, more later) and one must have been covering politics for at least one year. During the past decade, radio and TV newsmen became eligible to join, but magazine and weekly newspaper writers are still excluded. Membership is for life, and the total is restricted to 100 so that generally a vacancy occurs only when someone dies, although a few old-timers have been persuaded to accept the status of "associate" member. As a result of these policies, about one-fourth of the current Inner Circle roster consists of retired newsmen, and nearly that many are in public relations, some of them press agents for politicians or city agencies. Several of the p.r. men are casualties of a depressed industry, like Harry Harris, who saw three papers fold under him and now works for the New York *rh* of State. Others have simply abandoned reporting for more lucrative pursuits. One of these was Dom Peluso who left the *News* to flack for a number of politicians, including Controller Abe Beame. He now serves as legal counsel to the Queens public administrator, a job said to be worth a high five-figure sum in fees.

Harris and Peluso belong to what some people call the inner circle of the Inner Circle, made up mainly by members of the writing committee, which for the past three years has been headed by *Timesman*

Carroll and Eddie O'Neill of the *News*, the paper that dominates the organization. Other press agents on the 10-man committee are Joe Fitzpatrick, who works for the City Council; Martin Steadman, who has a variety of clients, including the Patrolmen's Benevolent Association and the Uniformed Fire Officers Association; and Paul Buiar, who numbers among his clients Con Edison, Coca Cola and the Uniformed Firefighters Association, the union presided over by Michael Maye. Buiar also directs the show. The group devotes the better part of three-and-a-half months to putting together the production. This close association of reporters and publicists is characteristically unprofessional, but as one writer put it, "The Inner Circle simply reinforces what already exists. These people are already friends."

Not surprisingly, there are only three blacks in the Inner Circle (Bob Teague of NBC, Joe Bragg of WHN and associate member Layhmond Robinson, a former *Times* reporter who works for the Health and Hospitals Corporation), for to some extent, the organization reflects the industry. Naturally, the same rationale is used to explain the exclusion of women, even though they are barred anyway by the language of the Inner Circle charter. More to the point, of course, is that the boys-night-out ambiance of the rehearsals requires that women be kept out, or else how do you tell your wife that she has to stay at home? (Maybe that's why the LCA was able to admit women some time ago. Few wives accompany their husbands to the state capital.) Women are permitted to see the show, but it was only last year that any of them were allowed to sit with the male guests. And this special concession was made only to public officials. The rest of the women—reporters, wives of politicians and wives of the performers—have to sit up in the balcony, as if in *shul*. They are admitted free of charge, as guests of individual Inner Circle members, each of whom has two tickets at his disposal. "My wife enjoys it up there," says Schoener. "She says she can see better." Dorothy Schiff, publisher of the *Post*, was one woman who re-

portedly didn't appreciate the elevated view back in the days before she was blacklisted by the Inner Circle. (In 1961, the *Post* violated the organization's code—"There are no reporters present," as stated in the program—by revealing that Mayor Wagner had hinted he would be seeking re-election. Eddie O'Neill, president of the Inner Circle that year, wrote Schiff a letter requesting that "she please favor us by not coming to any Inner Circle shows." This may explain why her paper goes after Inner Circle stories with gusto, though Schiff declined to discuss the matter.)

One story that received in-depth treatment in the *Post* was Rep. Bella Abzug's tearful reaction to *News* reporter Tom Poster's caricature at the 1971 dinner. Wearing considerable padding, Poster, who is a chunky man anyway, sang a song that began, "I guess I've never been the high-fashioned kind. Mother Nature gave me a big behind." In her recently published book, *Bella!*, Abzug devotes three pages to lambasting the Inner Circle. "What they did and said was vicious and repulsive and disgusting and vulgar, a product of their *Playboy* mentalities," she writes, adding that she is willing to incur political criticism but that "to make an attack on a woman's figure or physical appearance is to make an attack on all women." Undaunted by Abzug's fury, Poster revived his act this year in tandem with John Toscano, also of the *News*, who portrayed Rep. Shirley Chisholm. "I've been reapportioned. They took away my seat," announced Poster. "Really, darling," countered Toscano. "It doesn't show." Neither Abzug nor Chisholm was on hand to hear this thigh-slapper.

Before this year's show, the membership debated the issue of sexual integration, but when it looked as if there was no way of obtaining the necessary two-thirds vote, a couple of pro-women members won support for a compromise. A five-man committee was appointed to "study" this controversial matter and is expected to recommend that the barrier be lifted. At this writing, it appears the first woman may be admitted at the fall membership meeting. The honor probably will go to Judith Michaelson of the *Post*, despite the fact that there will inevitably be some grumbling about her coverage of the April 15 brutality. One wonders what will become of the quaint tradition that requires all freshmen members to appear in drag. "We've got a saying," remarks Eddie O'Neill, "the first year, you've got to be a whore."

The Inner Circle brotherhood has also closed its doors to *News* reporter Sam Roberts, who applied for membership early last year. A few months later, word leaked out that he was planning to expose some of the city officials who had attended the dinner as guests of firms with which

they do business. His editors told him the story was petty, but they agreed to run it after the police department's chief of detectives was temporarily suspended last fall for accepting a free dinner for four (ironically, also at the Hilton). Meanwhile, Roberts' membership bid had died in committee. In response to his story, the Mayor asked the Board of Ethics to rule on the practice of accepting gifts. The decision, handed down some months after the Mayor's request, was somewhat of a surprise. While it ruled out valuable gifts for city employees, the board stated: "Certain conduct which might seem to violate the Code [of Ethics] if it were to be literally construed does not appear to us to raise any genuine question concerning conflicts of interest." Being entertained by a city contractor at dinners like the Inner Circle's was one of those seeming violations that ought not to be, in the board's strange parlance, "literally construed."

Normally the Inner Circle invites its members to participate in what President Famm (in all seriousness) calls a "literary seminar," a trip partially subsidized by the organization. The 1971 books show an expenditure of \$2,856 for a junket to the Poconos. Since usually only about a third of the membership signs up, empty places are filled by some of the same city officials who come to the show. That cozy arrangement won't be repeated this year. Because of the precarious financial situation, the May excursion to Curacao was cancelled. Mickey Carroll, for one, wasn't sorry. "I'm not enthusiastic about the trips," he says. "I think they reinforce an image—one I think is erroneous—that the Inner Circle is made up of a bunch of guys profiteering."

Carroll is one of several Inner Circle members determined to propel the organization out of the era of the *New York Graphic*. But for several of the very fine political reporters in town whose names don't grace the Inner Circle rolls, even substantial reform would not suffice. Joe Kahn of the *Post*, for example, is only stating the obvious when he says, "Reporters should stay as far away as possible from anything which makes them obligated to the people they cover. No matter how you slice it, they [Inner Circle members] have to solicit these people to buy tables."

Still, there will probably always be an Inner Circle as long as there is a Room 9. You can't really blame its habitus for cherishing something that relieves the tedium of waiting around for the latest release or the next Board of Estimate hearing. And there will always be new recruits like *News* reporter Jim Ryan, who joined last year because, he says, "there's really not much to talk about in Room 9 unless you're a member."

## Fighting Over Boston's Phoenix

BY BILL KOVACH

To most journalists in the United States, the notion of achieving some measure of "democracy in the newsroom" seems as likely as an elastic deadline. Yet the idea that working newsmen and women should have a voice in the decisions that govern them and their institutions remains very much in the air these days. And on the rare occasion where it persists, something may come of it—as happened recently at *The Phoenix* in Boston.

*The Phoenix* is one of the many weekly supplemental (Nat Hentoff calls them "sea level") newspapers that sprung up during the 1960's in response to the demands of the cultural revolution led by the young and fueled by advertisers' discovery that they spent a lot of money, especially on entertainment. Unlike many of its counterparts, which founded for lack of editorial direction or lack of funds, or both, *The Phoenix* (circulation: 55,000) thrived. And two of the principal reasons were editor Harper Barnes, a former *St. Louis Post Dispatch* reporter, and Richard Missner, a Harvard Business School graduate, who put up the money to rescue the sagging tabloid in the spring of 1970.

Under Harper Barnes, *The Phoenix* built a staff that began gathering news that the established print media—blinded by the sides of the rut they had worn for themselves—neglected. Up front, the paper has put together over the past two years a succession of tough, well-reported and important news stories, among them: Vin McLellan's continuing series on military surveillance of civilians (including the first publication of the until-then-secret Army directive fingering which citizens should be spied upon and how) and an exposé on the ease of official access to private bank account information; a series by Charlie McCullom on the Boston school committee and its program of separating black students from white; and an investigative series on the Cambridge power structure that turned up evidence of real estate profiteering, political collusion, conflicts of interest and influence-peddling, as well as the Harvard-MIT-private development-political axis that has helped lead to the mess that is Cambridge land use and housing development. Overall, *The Phoenix* is what Harper Barnes

wanted it to be: "an interesting newspaper that tries to explain what our times are all about without the restrictions of a daily newspaper that has a lot of obligatory stories it has to do and nobody reads—an active rather than a reactive newspaper."

All of this was put together with a delicate touch that overlooked working habits, accepted four-letter words, gave maximum freedom to writers, both in style and in subject, and generally permitted a state of semi-controlled anarchy. But success, and the seductive promise of more to come, moved in to challenge this free-wheeling way of running *The Phoenix*, and a bitter fight for control of the weekly exploded this spring.

As far back as December, Missner, whose ownership had previously been marked by only sporadic interest in the weekly operation of the paper, apparently sensed a chance to put his business school training to work and make of *The Phoenix* a real profitmaking operation—or, "maximize the profit end," as Missner describes it. The time was obviously ripe. *The Phoenix* was gaining an edge on its direct competition, *Boston After Dark*, a slightly more establishment-oriented weekly tabloid. A terminal case of mismanagement had already assured the death of the *Herald-Traveler* and, though of no apparent direct importance to *The Phoenix*, would leave another hole in the printed record of life in Boston in which an aggressive and imaginative weekly might find new potential. Simply put by Missner, "we were expanding very rapidly and the potential was expanding just as rapidly." He began to assert himself. Each time, he met resistance in the person of Barnes who, after two years of virtually complete editorial control and close, personal relationships with the staff, chafed easily. Barnes, who would later become the major casualty of the conflict, recalls the beginning of his end as editor:

"Richard had been in Vermont about a month, and when he came back he had a series of demands to fire people and change the paper. He had always had an objection to obscene words in our stories and he didn't care for personal injections in news stories—complaining about

things like calling Mayor White, 'Kevin'—and he wanted to tighten up the stories. He wanted to sanitize the paper and he always held up *The Wall Street Journal* as his idea of a great newspaper. This seemed to be his goal and he had about 25 changes he wanted to make. I decided that I had put two years of my life into the paper and I was not going to let him turn it into *The Wall Street Journal*."

As for Missner, his plans for the paper had grown too large for the people under him: "We'd grown. We'd become a real voice in the community and we were trying to catch up with ourselves. All the middle-level people (editors and department heads) were the same ones who had been there from the start [in late 1969]. For many of them it had been their first job and clearly, now, they were over their heads in what the job demanded." Missner made a series of moves that shattered the easy-going atmosphere in the editorial offices. Beginning in March and continuing into May, he fired the business manager, fired and unfired Barnes, shifted personnel around, brought in a new editor (from an advertising firm) and outlined layout, content and style changes he wanted made. "His lead feet were stomping all over the place and I began to be afraid I'd be the next one squashed," recalls one reporter. "The idea of a union, which I'd laughed at before, began to sound better every day—everyone was getting paranoid." Things moved quickly thereafter:

May 1—The structural reorganization—effectively sealing Barnes off from the news side of the paper—was announced. The staff rejected the idea, stood behind Barnes and Barnes was fired.

May 2—Thirty-eight staffers—including the associate publisher—met and organized an employee's unions and threatened to strike for the reinstatement of Barnes.

May 3—Union recognition was added to the demands, "because without that issue we had no standing under labor law."

May 4—A strike was voted, but called off so negotiations could continue with Missner and the issue of May 8 was put out under the direction of Barnes, who had been unfired.

May 15—After a week of rumors and confusion, Missner reintroduced the rejected memo of changes, effective immediately, which demoted Barnes and Robert Rotner, the associate publisher; suspended comptroller Howard Garsh; brought in the new editor; and made policy changes in the news operation.

May 16—Union voted to strike. Pickets were set up at the office and at distribution points.

May 18-22—Strike accompanied by harrassing actions including an attempt to destroy copy of the edition prepared by non-strikers and fist fights on the picket lines. Economic pressure led to the cancellation of full-page ads by record companies, and Harvard Square news-dealers, supporting the strike, boycotted the paper.

"They had decided if it wasn't their paper then they'd destroy Richard's paper," Missner concluded. A strike edition put out by the strikers said the issue "is a question of who should decide what you read in your newspaper," a point of view sharpened and reinforced by several staff members who had attended the A.J. Liebling Counter-Convention in New York April 23 and 24.

May 23—The strikers were effectively strangling *The Phoenix* and Missner accepted a 14-point agreement that called for, among other things, the editorial board to select the next editor, recognition of the union as soon as validated by a secret vote, sole hiring and firing authority vested in the editor, a free hand for Missner in managing the business side. Barnes, who submerged his personal position in the broader fight, resigned.

**F**or most participants, the struggle was instructive. Hip journalists, accustomed to looking on members of organized labor as moneygrubbing clods found themselves praising the solidarity of Communications Workers of America members who honored their picket lines. They commiserated with teamsters who crossed those lines but apologized (their contract didn't allow them to honor a picket line of an unaffiliated union) and enjoy recalling early morning discussions with truck drivers on the techniques of unionism. Some of them screamed "scab" at former co-workers with a fervor and bitterness that scares them in retrospect: "I'm not accustomed to hitting people," said one reporter with a note of surprise still in his voice, "but when he took a swing at me when his wife tried to cross the picket line, I clobbered him." Perhaps for the first time, some of the writers who understood *The Phoenix* in terms only of open space for them to fill, discovered dimly perceived power centers like the record companies and their full-page ads and the finger Harvard Square news-dealers hold on the circulatory system of the paper. For his part, Missner discovered that the options his financial investment (\$300,000) in the newspaper gave him had very definite limits and that, up against determined, unified and capable opposition, those options were reduced to two: work out an agreement or withdraw his money and close the paper.

What all this means for *The Phoenix* is a difficult question to answer. Clearly, a major step toward democracy in the newsroom has been taken and a structure for more staff and community involvement in the news content of the paper has been established. All that is needed is to determine how that structure will be used and if, in the end, it will make any difference other than to provide job security to some writers who never thought much about it until face to face with the trash heap, or freedom to conduct business operations by a publisher who never realized he needed permission. Much of what happens next depends on how much was learned by each side from the experience, and some of the signs are not healthy.

The editorial staff, flushed with victory, talks about the editorial board and the direction it will give. They see an ongoing function by the community members, criticizing, advising, developing new concepts; consulting on direction, style and content—a real community input in the management of the news section of the paper. Those roles, however, are not written into the agreement, and Missner has no such vision. In fact, Richard Missner does not feel he has surrendered that much control over the editorial product. Sipping iced chocolate at a little outdoor restaurant



near the newspaper office in Cambridge recently, Missner thought about what he'd won and lost. Not many editors, it was suggested, will be as fortunate as the next one at *The Phoenix*, protected from both the whims of a clique of reporters or the publisher. "The difference," Missner said, "is that the staff must get four of the five votes of the board to fire an editor. I only have to get three votes. I cannot imagine a situation where the members of the board—since I control the budgets of the paper—would not fire an editor if I said I could not work with him."

Maybe he was only talking to convince himself he had not lost any control by the agreement (for he did say he thought the new system offered a great opportunity for the paper to become a leader in its field and develop a momentum that would be hard to match) or maybe there is still some distance between the thinking of the staff and the publisher. Wherever the truth lies may not be so important, for similar misunderstandings have been worked out before. In the long run, *The Phoenix* experiment will succeed or fail on how the new system is used to develop the paper, and here the signs are encouraging. Discussing the paper with Carol Eron and Vin McLellan, acting editor and co-editor, reveals an understanding that both the strength and weakness of *The Phoenix* are wrapped up in its concept of news and the style of its presentation. During the conversation, one or the other of them made the following points:

- The paper must remain active rather than reactive and search out stories the other media miss or ignore that tell something about where society is going.
- The staff wants a strong editor. The whole idea of the board was designed to protect the editor from pressure from top or bottom. The staff realizes the shortcomings of poorly edited or misdirected personal journalism and wants someone to ride herd on them but still be willing to experiment.
- A lot of new areas of involvement and understanding opened up during the strike and the paper needs to examine more closely ethnic groups, union problems and the working class in general.

If recognition is the first step toward correcting a problem, *The Phoenix* is on its way, for Eron and McLellan touched on some of the most noticeable weaknesses of the paper. Too often, the paper has mistaken its role as one of shocking the establishment. A recent article, for example, capitalized on the attempt to assassinate Governor Wallace with a page-one head: *HOW TO SHOOT A CANDIDATE*. Most everyone would agree, I think, that society has shown enough of its sick side not to be encouraged for the sake of an effect. The article, by the way, added little to public knowledge, offering instead a rehash of all the reasons why it is easy to shoot public figures. Other pieces, bent on offering one emotional response to a given situation—most often of a person, even more often of a political person—resort to a lot of color, tricky writing, four-letter words and a sense of being there. When a critic wonders why, based on the in-

formation contained in the story, there was ever any reason to be there in the first place, the standard response is: "If you want the facts of who did what, when, there, why and how—read the *Globe*." It is, I think, a serious mistake for papers like *The Phoenix* to always think of themselves as supplemental. If what they have to offer is of any general value, and if their readers look to them for information (a fact that McLellan found sobering recently when a readership survey pointed out that 20 per cent of their readers use *The Phoenix* as their primary source of information), they are doing a disservice by assuming their readers get their facts in the daily press.

Then, too, there is the disturbing concept of news that came through in one discussion with two *Phoenix* reporters. They told of how a black reporter worked on the "scab issue" of the paper and said that he did so because the union and its striking staff were "racists and an illegitimate union." "To their everlasting credit," said one of the reporters, "[other Boston reporters] chose to ignore it because they knew it wasn't true and it would be hard to write it in a straight newspaper and get across the idea his charges weren't true." As a matter of fact, there are no blacks on *The Phoenix*, though the paper publishes reams on equal rights. But, whether or not the charges were true, they should have been examined by reporters covering the story and, at the very least, those reporters should never be praised "to their everlasting credit" for ignoring the charges out of hand. The only positive result of that experience will come if *The Phoenix* reporters recognize in it the pitfalls of first-person journalism that too often accepts rumor as fact and too quickly attributes motives based on little more than suspicion.

Still, the outlook is hopeful. The staff takes the new situation seriously and the publisher senses a new potential in the new arrangement. More importantly, the reporters are talking of the need for a retreat where they can get together and decide how best to use their opportunity. Maybe the hope is best indicated by the analysis of one of the staff members who said, when asked about the future:

"The general culture we came out of—the counter-culture—is washed up. The late 60's saw a burst of cultural energy in such forms as hippies, communes, rock music, but that has all ebbed. We aren't about to join Mr. Nixon in his dream of expanding American capitalism, but we need to find some way of appraising what's going on—a new sense of cultural movement. We have to stay in front of where things are going and expand into ethnic questions, women-men relationships and so forth. In this process of working out our direction we can include Missner because we don't have to be afraid of him now. We can sit down with him and project what the paper will be and not have it dictated to us from above. We can get ahead of the news again."

Who knows, maybe the idea of reporters and editors and publishers talking to one another about their product can produce some interesting new directions? Maybe it will even spread around.

## Why We Can't Say B\_\_\_\_shit

BY ETHEL REED STRAINCHAMPS

On March 10, 1972, Germaine Greer was served with a court summons in Auckland, N.Z., for having used illegal language in a public meeting. Several American periodicals regarded the event as newsworthy, but none of them could bring themselves to disclose the details that were at the heart of the matter. Albin Krebs intimated in the "Notes on People" column in *The New York Times* that Greer's offense had consisted of just one word—"an eight-letter barnyard epithet." But a UPI dispatch in the same issue of the *Times* was devoted to the consequences of Greer's having uttered, on the same occasion, "a euphemism for sexual intercourse."

Were these two separate charges? The *New York Post* and the *Daily News* both skipped the story that day, but on the next day the *News* carried another UPI dispatch that differed from the one in the *Times* not only in the angles covered but in its characterization of the offending word. In the *News* it was "a four-letter word" and was identified as a "a vulgarism for sexual intercourse." Were there two UPI reporters who heard two different words, or could the different characterizations of the word be due to a semantic generation-gap? Perhaps the sexually liberated generation regards sexual intercourse as just a dirty way of saying fuck.

*Time* magazine for the following week informed us that Greer had been summonsed for using "the pastoral expletive 'bullshit' and an even earthier word." That was some help. Up to that point, the puzzled reader might have supposed that Greer had said "goad turd" and / or "hump." *Newsweek*, which can't say bullshit, kept mum. In its June issue, the recently unshackled *Playboy* divulged on its up-to-the-minute "Newsfront" page that Greer had said fuck (never mind the bullshit) and

had been fined \$40 therefor. *Playboy* went on to deride UPI for having called the word a euphemism for intercourse "in a moment of confusion," disregarding the possibility that the reporter's choice of labels might have been deliberate. (*Playboy*'s zeal is typical of the recent convert.) On May 16, Albin Krebs, heedless of the confusion he might be inflicting on his constant readers, reported that Greer's appeal of a \$50 fine had been denied by a judge who ruled that the "four-letter word" Greer had used at a public meeting "might be acceptable to some but was on the whole a grubby term."

It may be that the linguistic coyness of the mass media irritates me more than it does the average person. As a part-time reader and usage consultant for a publisher of dictionaries and handbooks, I have a professional interest in learning the facts about a word's acceptability. I first began to lose patience with the journalists in the mid-sixties, at the time of the Berkeley riots. News reports from that scene soon made it evident that the most heinous offense committed by the students was the utterance of a certain unidentified word. Eventually we learned that it was not just the naive cops who found the word intolerable but spokesmen for the board of regents, and, I think, even the university president, all of whom looked like common-sense, not to say phlegmatic, types. Until these level-headed gentlemen let it be known that the students' persistent use of the word blocked any prospects of peaceful negotiations, I thought I had guessed what the word was. But in the Ozarks, where I was still living at the time, fuck isn't all that big a deal, so I began to suspect that the students had latched on to some rare word—perhaps having to do with an unimaginably

revolting perversion—that was not yet in the Ozarks vocabulary. Finally, the *New Republic* ingeniously managed to convey the missing information, though it was not yet printing the word: "A handful of students marching about with placards containing the word which is an acronym for Freedom Under Clark Kerr generated sufficient political pressures to demand last week's resignations." I was glad to take their word for it, but I could find no confirmation. On the contrary, Nat Hentoff, writing in *Playboy* (*Playboy!*) about the very same demonstration said that what the placards contained was "the most common four-letter Anglo-Saxon word in American speech." Even in the Ozarks *fuck* isn't all that common.

Occasionally newspaper editors themselves have doubts about the value of clinging on to this remnant of Victorian prudery. One of their collective soul-searchings took place in December, 1968, when The Associated Press sent excerpts over its wires from the Walker Commission Report on the disturbances at that year's Democratic convention in Chicago. The author of the report, Daniel Walker—a Chicago lawyer and businessman—said in the preface: "We have, with considerable reluctance, included the actual obscenities used by the participants—demonstrators and police alike. Extremely obscene language was a contributing factor to the violence described in the report, and its frequency and intensity were such that to omit it would inevitably underestimate the effect it had." Walker further pointed out the obvious to our national guardians of the current historical truth by noting that printing only dash lines where the report had used the words themselves would "destroy the important tone of the report."

How true. There is a concealed smirk behind every dash or asterisk in those verbal guessing games, and smirks from men on the sidelines are hardly the appropriate response to symbols so potent they have driven the men who were involved to mayhem, and so mind-blowing that, while we were permitted to witness the brutality and gore they triggered, we were shielded from the sight and the sound of the words themselves. But Walker's brief for printing them was of little avail. Even the Government Printing Office, that servant of the people, prissily refused to soil its fingers by publishing the report. And of 87 member papers checked by the AP, 12 printed excerpts, using dots, dashes or asterisks for the offending words; two others, the commonly owned *Louisville Courier-Journal* and *Times*, printed the excerpts verbatim. (The executive editor of those papers later apologized, promising never to let the words issue from his Linotype machines again.) Readers outside Louisville who wanted to know what *The New York Times* did not regard as fit to print had to wait till the *Times* saw fit to print a paperback in which the report was de-bowdlerized.

The newspapers valiantly withstood the scattered criticism they got (e.g. from the *Columbia Journalism Review*) for their pusillanimous handling of the report. Nobody but that hapless Louisville pioneer expressed any urge to repent. In fact the last word was spoken by the *Time's* resident linguist, Theodore M. Bernstein, in the bulletin of the American Society of Newspaper Editors. Bernstein acknowledged that the dirty-word problem has been made more acute for editors recently by the centrality of the words to accounts of protests and to reviews of current books, films and plays. Nevertheless, he advised continuation of the present hands-off policy and concluded with the cheerful prediction of a "backward swing," for which, he said consolingly, "there is ample precedent." As evidence he cited half a dozen words that were once "standard" but are now unprintable, though their recent revival in speech is putting editors to the test.

Bernstein's six words are *arse*, *fart*, *piss*, *prick*, *shit* and *tit*. And only one has ever been "in polite use," as the *Oxford English Dictionary* puts it, since newspapers were invented. *Piss* was borrowed from the French in the 14th century as a euphemism for *urine*, which, in the then current pronunciation "you-Rhine," must have sounded a lot stronger than the little French word, and it kept its status through the translation of the King James Version of the Bible, but it was being printed *p-s* in books by the end of the 17th century. *Tit* in another spelling was used in the Wyclif Bible but the KJV elevated that to *paps*. The appearance of any of our currently taboo words in any newspaper has always, until the early 60's, made the issue a collector's item. The most prized one is an 1882 issue of the *Times* of London, in which the following passage, supposedly from a speech made by Sir William Harcourt, the Attorney General, mysteriously appeared:

I saw in a Tory journal the other day a note of alarm in which they said, "Why, if a tenant-farmer is elected for the North Riding of Yorkshire the farmers will be a political power which will have to be reckoned with." The speaker then said he felt inclined for a bit of fucking. I think that is very likely. (Laughter.)

Later that year the same prankster or an emulator worked the same word into a book ad in the same newspaper, but so far as is known neither that word nor any in its class was ever seen in a newspaper again before the early 1960's. The first—and only—*shit* I have found in a conventional newspaper is from the one in Aspen, Colo. The editors were outraged at the decision of the judges who disqualified the winner of a skiing event when he slipped, fell and said "shit" while making his way toward the stand to get his medal. And they said so in words of one syllable—on the editorial page. Until the 1960's, magazines were equally self-censoring for more than three centuries, and the few books that used *The Words* became notorious—not to mention illegal—for that fact alone.

Joyce's *Ulysses* was banned in America until it was cleared in a court case in 1933. *Lady Chatterley's Lover* was not legally publishable in England until 1960. Hemingway had to load *For Whom The Bell Tolls* with the word *obscenity* which the reader had to translate to fit the context. Norman Mailer had his characters going around saying "fug" in *The Naked and the Dead*. Now anything goes in books; magazines have relaxed a little; newspapers will print profanity as spoken by newsmakers, but they are still excising English words that refer to biological parts and functions below the belt. Just as if nothing in that area had changed during the past decade.

The mass-circulation periodicals have no set policy on dirty words. In a spot check of editors recently, I discovered that I know more about their actual practice than they do. An editor at the *Times*, for example, assured me that his paper would publish any word that a notable person would speak. But it won't, of course. *Time* editors think they broke the *shit* barrier in June, 1970, when they printed an article by R.Z. Sheppard on the Mailer-Breslin mayoral campaign. And Charles Elliott, a *Life* copy editor, thinks his magazine used the word once—in a Shana

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Alexander column. But they are both wrong, too. The Mailer-Breslin slogan was "No More Bullshit," and Shana Alexander only reported the words on a placard displayed at the 1968 Chicago Democratic Convention: "Bullshit Daley." Prefixed *shit* (there are also chickenshit and horseshit) is a beginner's device; on the average, magazines spend two or three years playing around with *shit* compounds before leaping into the real thing. That has been more or less the course followed by *Esquire* (*Esquire!*), if that magazine's erratic behavior can be called a course. Dwight Macdonald, *Esquire's* film critic at the time, pioneered with an unprefixed *shit*, though admittedly not in the usual sense of the word. He was defending "The Connection," which was having censorship problems because it used the word—to mean *heroin*. *Esquire* was also printing *bullshit* in 1963, but had reverted to *bulls--* by 1972.

The real beginner's word, however, is *ass*. The *ass* taboo was the first to be flouted by a respectable number of the mass media, and for many—including TV films and talk shows—remains the only one. A *Times* editor said recently, "It took us 117 years to get to the point where we could print horse's *ass* and we seem to have stopped there." This landmark event occurred in 1968, when, after the usual dither that surrounds an obscenity first, the *Times* decided to shoot the works and okay the phrase in a by-lined Washington dispatch disclosing that FDR had once characterized a certain *Times* man with the epithet. That same year (1968), *Time*, *Life* and *The New York Times Magazine* also broke out an *ass* or two, but, predictably, the *Times Book Review* had unveiled *ass* the year before, and, surprisingly, the *Saturday Evening Post* the year before that. (The Sunday *Times* supplements consistently outdistance the daily in linguistic daring.) *Newsweek*, which is lagging behind in the second (*bullshit*) lap, was the first in its field to begin printing *ass* (1964), though it has recently backed down to *a--*.

Of course the *ass* breakthrough may seem to be a negligible event now, but in 1948, when H.L. Mencken published his Supplement II to *The American Language*, he evaded the word in his discussion of GI slang, identifying it only as "the ancient Germanic word for backside." (In the same sentence he referred the reader to a certain passage in the Bible

(continued on page 11)

## The Origins of Obscenity

There is a psychologically sound defense of the editorial reluctance to publish the English taboo words. As spoken morphemes, they are not unadulterated symbols, as most words are assumed to be, but hybrids, combining speech and gesture. They can no more be cleaned up by open and high-minded usage than can the Bronx cheer or the symbolic gestures of spitting and hawking—of which they are only formalized equivalents. Each of the words begins and ends with one of the "blowing sounds"—k(c), f, p, s(sh) and t—with a short vowel in the middle. Some similar syllables that are used only as exclamations are labeled by dictionaries as "natural sounds of disgust." Our dirty words are not exclusively "four-letter words", and none of them are Anglo-Saxon. They all came into the language after Anglo-Saxon (Old English) had given way to Middle English—that is, after 1100 A.D. Only *shit* of all our obscene words has a postulated Anglo-Saxon ancestor—there seems to have been an ancient word *bescytan* that meant *dirty*.

Nor are our taboo words the only strong, expressive words, usually considered typically Anglo-Saxon, that actually came into the language in the Middle or Modern periods. Almost all of them did. They are the products of a word-forming principle that began to spread

where they'll do the most good?" There was a momentary silence, and then a youthful panelist shouted "Up your ---!"

Newsweek, May 8, 1972

through the language like a contagion after the Norman Conquest (1066) and is still flourishing wildly, especially in American English. It consists in assigning meaning to the phonemes (sounds) that make up words, and includes onomatopoeia, or imitative vocal sounds. It invaded the language during the period after the Conquest when French was the language of the courts and Latin of the universities and the uneducated masses had English to themselves. They stripped it of a vast accumulation of grammatical inflexions, baring its roots. They then sensed a relationship between some of the roots and their meanings; they invested others with meanings where none had existed before; they coined new words by using the semantic sounds of the old.

From Old English *grunnian*, for example, they got first *groan* and *grunt*, then *grumble*, *growl* and *grudge*, in that order. Practically every generation since has added a new word to that family, our own contributing *gripe* (1940). From one Anglo-Saxon word *flicorian* they

"We got other people on the paper," he said, his voice rising. "If they want to have a effing paper, let them do effing something!"

Jerry Bledsoe, New York, June 5, 1972

abstracted the *fl*, which means "moving light" (as opposed to *gl*, meaning "unmoving light"). Linguists call the principle involved in the last two, and in the changes in meaning that occur when the vowels of a word are broadened, "phonetic symbolism." That is the right term for our obscene words.

The combination of sound and gesture is particularly evident in the vowel formation of phonetically symbolic words. In a sequence that goes *splash*, *splash*, *splash*, the smaller vowels mean smaller things; the large vowels, larger. The word with *o* (as in *cock*) is the most impressive; the word with *u* (as in *cunt*) is the most nothing. (Men made the language.) All of the other English words for the more indelicate bodily parts, functions and emissions are made up of the same consonant sounds as our obscene words: *fart*, *flux*, *puke*, *pus*, *pooft*, *snort*, *snot* (*sn* means *nasal*), *sweat*, *suck*, *tit*, *twat*. But only the three messiest of those also have the dirty vowel.

The etymology of *fuck* and *cunt*, our two most obscene words, has heretofore been obscured because tracking it down has been left to men, and men have resolutely rejected the truth. The truth is that the two words that male philologists regard as the most "sexually energizing" words in the language are nothing more than Middle English corruptions of the French words *foutre* and *con*. The smitten males have tried to prove that the words are as ancient a part of English as, for example,

head, heart and foot, willfully ignoring the fact that truly ancient English words—those from Indo-European roots—have *h* where Latin and French have *c* (heart-cardio) and *b* where they have *f* (blast-flatus). That *fuck* and *cunt* are to *foutre* and *con* as *hurricane* and *kickshaws* are to *ouragan* and *quelque chose* would seem to be a likely hypothesis to anyone less mesmerized by the two sex words than English-speaking males.

The irreverent Middle English warped a whole batch of respectable French words to make them sound more like what they

I once asked the great outfielder, Carl Furillo, how he learned to play the right field wall at Ebbets Field. "I worked, that's f---ing how," Furillo said. That is more or less the way

Roger Kahn, Esquire, July 1972

meant to an Englishman. They succeeded so well with *fuck* and *cunt* that their more sophisticated brethren have been embarrassed about the words ever since. Their naked aggression and contempt betray facets of male attitudes toward women that civilized men prefer not to acknowledge. For comparison, German acquired a *ficken* and Dutch a *fokken* as cognates of *fuck*, but *ficken* is to *fuck* as *pinch* is to *punch* and *fokken* also lacks a certain thrust.

That it is the sound semantics of the words, rather than the indecent ideas they evoke that lends them their evil potency, is proved by the nonchalance with which men can write about *fellatio* and *cunnilingus*. Walter Kerr has discussed those in drama reviews on the front page of the *Times* Sunday entertainment section. (Kerr uses the phrase "to

Angeles sunshine. Just as casually he diagnoses the actress's problems. "She can't play a tough ---" The prescrip-

R.Z. Sheppard, Time, May 8, 1972

practice *fellatio*", which makes the idea a little funnier than is necessary. He could avail of himself of John Updike's neatly back-formed transitive verb, "to fellate."

Our present obscene syllables are the distilled essence of dirtiness, to the extent that dirtiness can be expressed in a constellation of English phonemes. Their very longevity in the face of countless challenges attests to their supreme aptness for their double function—service as nouns or verbs in deliberately crude sentences and as contemptuous expletives. *Fuck*, for example, has outlasted more than 1,400

State Authority. We reached him at a construction site and questioned him about his "clerical" duties.

"I'm tired of all you g--- d--- newspapers bothering people!" he roared. "Why don't you get a real job instead of sitting around on your---!" Then he

Jack Anderson, New York Post, June 1, 1972

rivals in its six to eight hundred years of existence. Not counting regular words used figuratively, such as *plough* and *screw*, the hardest of these proved to be *sard*, *swive*, *swing*, *prang*, *wap*, *fain*, *thrum* and *occupy*, all puerile bleats indeed compared to the winner, and still champion.

Regardless of how the media deal with their problem, our dirty words are destined to remain dirty unless our language is divested of its unique genius for sound symbolism. That is a price too high to pay merely to ease the conscience of a few little old gentlemen in tennis shoes.

E.R.S.

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rather than spell out *piss*, and for two even more shocking words he resorted to "one beginning with *f* and one beginning with *s*."

Fortunately, a three-dash word is less frustrating to the reader than a four-dash one. It has to be *ass*; *pee* is now being spelled out by everyone who uses it at all. Still *a-* or *-* can leave nagging questions in the mind of a reader. For example, was it the FBI, Jack Anderson, his syndicate, the *New York Post* or Jane Fonda who censored the following in an Anderson column in the *Post*? "The army of agents who follow Jane Fonda around often have difficulty conveying her language. One memo, stamped 'Secret—No Foreign Dissemination,' contains a review of her anti-military roadshow which, wrote the investigator, 'consisted of songs such as "Kiss My A--". [Anderson, a devout Mormon, makes such deletions himself.]

Before *Time* caved in on *bullshit*, we had to depend on *Newsweek*'s cryptograms for evidence of the word's progress (*Time*'s writers were evidently holding out for all or nothing). Thus it was from *Newsweek* that we learned that David Dellinger's contempt of court in the Chicago-Seven trial consisted of saying, "Oh *bull---!* *Bull---!* That's an absolute lie!" Perhaps the sight of that outburst in print alerted the editors to the fact that *hull* alone doesn't even sound naughty anymore, much less actionable. At any rate, when confronted with the next notable *bullshit* quote—at the conclusion of the 1970 gubernatorial campaign—*Newsweek* reported that the Hon. Arthur Goldberg had said, "Rockefeller is full of bulls---. I want you to quote me." They seem to be creeping up on the word one letter at a time. *Time*, recently liberated, spelled out the Goldberg quote but the dailies ignored it, thus foiling the candidate's attempt to puncture his own stuffed-shirt image. *Newsweek*'s editors are inclined to attribute their seeming modesty not to an implicit deference to their publisher, Katharine Graham, but to the explicit blue pencil of their new managing editor, Lester Bernstein.

American publishers of books and of non-mass magazines apparently took their cue from the favorable decision in England's Lady Chatterley trial. Saul Bellow spelled out all the words in *Herzog* (1961). *The New York Review of Books*, which began publishing in 1963, printed *cunt*, the ultimate barrier, in an early issue, and before another year was out, had rifled through the whole lexicon, including *jissom*, Mary McCarthy's exquisite version of a word that James Jones had spelled *jizm* in *From Here to Eternity*. *The Atlantic* and *Commentary* first printed *fuck*ing in 1965; *Harper's* in 1968. *Playboy* had Peter O'Toole saying (in 1965), "So I

thought, well *f--- it*," and in 1966 published a long article by Ray Russell in defense of the taboo words while ponderously managing to avoid putting any one of them into cold type. And on May 17, 1972, *Variety* front-paged a story about the bad luck that had befallen the film documentary "Fillmore." It got an R rating on account of a certain word on its sound track, *Variety* says, but *Variety* identified the offense only as "that word."

In short, the facts about the careers of the dirty words belie the timorous editorial rationales for avoiding them. As Theodore Bernstein summed those up in the *ASNE Bulletin*, they are mainly: (1) To keep them from falling under the eyes of innocent children; and (2) To avoid bad taste. Is the taste of *Variety* superior to *Harper's*? Was *Playboy* of the sixties, with its standard page of smutty jokes, its raunchy ads and its suggestive nude photos, less likely to damage the eyes of children than the contemporary *Atlantic*? *B---shit!*

Our dirty words are inherently offensive; they are offensive sounds formalized (page 10). They were never nice and never will be, so nice people don't address them to other nice people nor use them in discussing any other people. Their structure does make them the perfect expletives, however, and even nice people are now using them in this function. If reporters want to tell on the people who use them, they should do so forthrightly. The business of giving us dashes where the words go belongs in the era of drop-seat drawers. The practice does not mitigate the obscenity but puts knobs on it, like curtaining a toothpick in action behind a dainty napkin.

Theo Lippman Jr. of the *Baltimore Sun* has suggested that editors avoid confronting the dilemma by resorting to the "old comic-strip standbys," those dozen or so non-literal symbols that come on typewriter keys. Then they could sell decoders to people who want to know what the words are "that are being used on the newsfronts of the world," and let the rest nurse their ignorance. Lippman was probably joking, but in view of the fact that it takes only five symbols to replace the dirty letters, his proposal is quite practical. Yet, as I learned by trying it, it's only a temporary solution. In the code I worked out, # = *k*; \* = *f*; & = *p*; ! = *s*; @ = *t*. Those are the rejective blowing sounds that make up our dirty words. I threw in ? for *b*, the semi-blowing sound of our semi-dirty words (?u@, ?all!). But I have already reached the point where the sight of \*u# and -un@ vaguely affronts me and I report the Lippman suggestion only as a reminder that the traditional symbols are also only symbols and won't bite.

## Tom Wolfe and His Dirigible

Editor's note: Much of what has been written to date about that persistent phenomenon, the new journalism, has been set down with the special bias of the pleader, pro or con. Rarely has the debate been joined as it was at the A.J. Liebling Counter-Convention in late April. Participants in a panel discussion on the subject were Tom Wolfe and Gail Sheehy, whose exercises in new journalism appear in *New York* magazine; Gay Talese, author of *The Kingdom and the Power* and *Honor Thy Father*; and film critic Pauline Kael, reporter Calvin Trillin and critic Renata Adler, all of *The New Yorker*. What follows is a partial transcript of their discussion, edited only for space and clarity. The moderator is Benjamin DeMott, critic, novelist and professor of English at Amherst College, who asked Tom Wolfe to open the session by defining the new journalism.

Wolfe: Actually this subject of the new journalism has gotten to be a kind of a dirigible that I send up every now and then and which you are free to shoot down or applaud or sell tickets for or anything else. I think the main thing at the outset is not to get distracted by the term itself, which I don't even like, because the part of it that is always bad is the word "new," of course. And I want to be the first one here to say, to save everybody else a lot of trouble, that under definitions I would set up for this new journalism, the people who have already met the requirements are, chronologically, Boswell for starters, Mark Twain on occasion, Chekhov in a couple of curious instances, and, coming up to the present, some of the writers for *New Masses* during the 1930's, John Hersey, and, of course, anyone like A.J. Liebling himself. So I think that the best way to start in is with some

what of a very brief history to show you what I think was new, what took up a lot of momentum in the 1960's.

Starting in about the late 1880's, there got to be a pattern among people with really literary, not journalistic, ambitions to start in working on a newspaper as a kind of motel that you are going to check into overnight as a little stop on the way to the final triumph. But the final triumph was always known as "the novel." The idea was to put in a little time on a paper, accumulate a little experience, get to know the real world, etc., and then at some point in the future—like Stephen Crane, like Theodore Dreiser, and like many, many figures since then, to put journalism behind you and to buckle down and move on to a higher form, which was always going to be known as "the novel." This pattern is practically 90 years old now.

In the 1960's a curious thing was happening here in New York when I came to work on the *Herald-Tribune*. There was a kind of secret little competition starting among people who were known as feature writers. Feature writers were people who wrote stories that were not concerned with so-called "hard news." They wrote anything from sort of chuckly little items off the police beat, such as, to use an example I once used, the out-of-towner who checks into a hotel in San Francisco with the idea of committing suicide, throws himself out of his fifth story window, falls nine feet and sprains his ankle. What he didn't know was his hotel was on a steep hill. Now that was an example of a police-beat feature story that gave you a little chance to do some writing. Another favorite was the human interest story, which was a long and often hideously sentimental story about somebody who was beset either by tragedy or an unusual hobby. Now this human interest story or human nature story also gave you a chance to write. But all the people who got involved in this kind of competition of the feature story were really people who were just biding their time before they struck out on their own and wrote a novel, because if you were interested in writing, primarily, that was what the whole game was all about. It was unthinkable that you would aim yourself in any other direction.

(continued on page 14)

# THE BIG APPLE

## The Zuesse Tapes

Eric Zuesse would like to run the advertisement on this page in *The New York Times*. The newspaper's Advertising Acceptability Department, however, says nothing doing. And thereby hangs an instructive tale, some of which, fortunately, Eric Zuesse has had the presence of mind to record on tape.

First, though, some background. *Bargain Finder* is a 27-page booklet that sells for \$4.95 and promises to guide thrifty consumers in New York City to savings of up to 70 per cent. The stores and commodities recommended were checked out by the 15 members of Consumers' Alliance, which publishes the booklet and of which Zuesse is director.

*Bargain Finder* has sold some 1,300 copies since it was published nine months ago and has generally received high marks. Sally Hegelsen, "Scenes" editor of *The Village Voice*, says the guide offers "truly fantastic discounts." The booklet has also been praised by consumer affairs reporters Lucille Rich of WCBS-TV and Grace Lichtenstein of the *Times*.

Zuesse's first encounter with the Advertising Acceptability Department came last November when he sought to place a tiny ad (16 agate lines) in the *Times*. As recorded by Zuesse, his conversation with the department's Ed McNamara went as follows:

*Z: Hi. I decided to stop by. I am sort of on the run. I was wondering what the decision was.*

*M: All right. We think we can live with it. [Although] in the first paragraph of the *Bargain Finder*'s introduction you make some very pointed remarks about our advertisers. You don't say "advertisers of *The New York Times*," but you refer to our retail stores.*

*Z: I see. In other words, you feel that this might offend some of the larger stores that advertise?*

*M: Well, yeah . . .*

The *Times* ran the small ad and it pulled well, so Zuesse decided it would be worth gambling \$1,300 to run the ad on this page in the *Times* book page this spring. That led to the following telephone conversation May 2:

*M: Good morning, Mr. Zuesse. This is Ed McNamara, Times.*

*Z: Yes.*

*M: Well, I'm sorry, but there are whole paragraphs which we have to take out of that big ad.*

*Z: I see. Whole paragraphs?*

*M: Well, the first paragraph about comparison shopping, that you couldn't match the prices at stores anywhere. And then the reference to*

*"no more need to rush to special sales and make hasty buying decisions," and as I'd mentioned to you, the "stores that can meet and beat those prices every day."*

*Z: Well, of course, this is true.*

*M: Well, that's where we differ. And then down below, "You lose money by paying too much," and "stop overpaying." Now, you see these are all direct references to our retail advertisers.*

*Z: I see. Well, actually, they are indirect references.*

## How to get bargains without comparison shopping

Save 20-70% off everything you buy.

We've done all the work for you.

We've searched the entire city for 3 years, to find the stores with the lowest prices on everything from cars to canaries.

Now, you can reap the benefits of our labor.

Why sweat out comparison shopping? The stores you'd find probably couldn't match the prices at the stores' recommend anyway. Comparison shopping, after all, is our FULL-TIME OCCUPATION. It's all we've been doing for the last 3 years. We've been professionals at it. And it's so easy for YOU to discover the incredible bargain stores that we spent thousands of dollars and years of effort to find.

Just look in **BARGAIN FINDER: The Money Saving Guide to NYC Shops**. This compact handbook tells all about the 292 genuine NYC super-bargain stores where you save 20-70% off everything you buy. Values like a \$110 Garrard turntable for \$66, a \$155 Polaroid for \$67, a \$225 French suit for \$30, silk for \$1 lb. Year-round. No more need

to rush to "special sales" and make hasty buying decisions. These 292 stores can meet and beat those prices every day!

Here's what Sally Hegelsen, "Scenes" editor of *The Village Voice*, says of **BARGAIN FINDER**:

"I've seen quite a number of what claim to be money-saving guides, but I've never seen one that lists so many stores, so many hard-to-find shops, some of which offer truly fantastic discounts, . . . places that even the most experienced New York shopper has never heard of."

Each day you don't have **BARGAIN FINDER**, you're losing money by paying too much for food, clothes, appliances, drugs and other items. Stop overpaying NOW! Order **BARGAIN FINDER TODAY**.

**BARGAIN FINDER: The Money Saving Guide to NYC Shops**

To cut your shopping costs now, send today, only \$4.95 and 7% NY tax.

Consumers' Alliance, 28 Bedford St., NYC 10014.  
Enclose \$4.95 plus 7% NY tax per copy. Or BARGAIN FINDER. Please mail to:  
Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

*M: Well, ha, ha. We don't see them that way. We see them as direct.*

*Z: You mean stores like Macy's and such?*

*M: Well, all our retail advertisers. Uh huh.*

*Z: Well, some of the retail advertisers in *The New York Times* are recommended in *Bargain Finder*.*

*M: (six seconds of silence.)*

*Z: In fact, this is one place we look to to get some leads on stores to look into.*

*M: (seven seconds of silence.)*

Both McNamara and John Furey, who heads the Advertising Acceptability Department, justified rejection of the ad on the ground that it violated the newspaper's longstanding rules for retail advertising. Specifically, they maintained the ad ran counter to the newspaper's prohibition against "statements or representations which refer to the goods, price, service or advertising of any competitor" and "statements which claim to undersell competitors."

The department does not always enforce these standards so rigorously, however. Recent advertisements in daily and Sunday

editions vow that Scandinavian Ski Shops offer "the best buys in town"; that Alexander's has doubleknit luxury suits for \$69 that are "currently selling in other stores for \$140-\$155"; that Dubin & Korsunsky jewelers "will not be undersold."

Then, of course, there was Ralph Ginzburg's oft-repeated pitch for his *Moneysworth* that began: "Virtually every time you spend money, whether at the supermarket, department store, drug store, or gas station, you're being ROBBED! You're being duped, hoodwinked, and swindled out of the full value of your money by a combination of deceptive selling techniques that include Madison Avenue double-talk, mendacious salesmanship, and insidious labeling and packaging ploys." But that was full-page, big budget stuff, not a \$1,300 one-shot.

The *Times* may have shut Zuesse out for the time being, but it is finding him a determined adversary. He has taken his case to both the Federal Trade Commission and the anti-trust division of the U.S. Justice Department, and is exploring with *Consumers Report* the possibility of establishing a committee to deal with unfair advertising practices in the media. He has even moved Rep. Benjamin S. Rosenthal (D., N.Y.) to try and set up a congressional hearing on such practices.

"Quite frankly," Rosenthal wrote Zuesse recently, ". . . the rationalizations and double-think used by the *Times* to justify what is in reality an effort to protect large advertisers, are surprising to one who has always regarded that paper as the leading Journal in the United States." Surprised or not, Representative Rosenthal went on to allow that advertising pressures sometimes even influenced news judgment, and thereby hangs yet another *Times* tale.

## Editing Retail

On May 23, the Appellate Division of the New York State Supreme Court ruled that the method used by several leading New York City department stores in computing finance charges was illegal. The 3-2 decision held that the widely used "previous balance" system of calculating credit charges violated the state's Personal Property Law, which states that such charges must be levied "on the outstanding indebtedness from month to month."

The ruling strikes terror in the pocketbooks of the retail industry, which now makes its customers pay a 1.5 per cent monthly finance charge on, say, a \$400 bill, even if \$350 of that amount has been paid. The defendants—among them Macy's, Gimbel's, Bloomingdale's and Abraham & Strauss—plan to appeal, as does Sheldon

# THE BIG APPLE

NEW YORK POST

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

VARIETY

VOICE

THE NEW YORKER

1010 WINS

V. Burman, the lawyer for those who brought the class action. Burman seeks to recover what could amount to millions of dollars in past overpayments under the previous balance system—an aspect of his suit the Appellate Division ruled against.

In the days following the decision, information about it was available in the *Post*, the *Daily News*, *Women's Wear Daily*, *Newsday* and on WCBS-TV, among other places. But not a line appeared in the *Times*. Indeed, Burman's suit has received scant attention in the *Times* ever since he filed the class actions in late 1970 and early 1971.

Last September 1, for example, the Manhattan attorney testified in Albany on behalf of proposed state legislation that would reduce credit costs to retail consumers. Robert J. Cole, a *Times* financial writer, covered the hearing, but his piece ignored Burman's testimony. Earlier that summer, the Sunday *Times* business section ran a round-up of class actions against retail credit plans across the country. The New York suits were ignored in that article, too.

Shortly after Burman testified in Albany, Cole called his office and asked for copies of the complaint and other documents pertinent to the class action. Burman mailed them off, and on September 10, Cole called Burman and, among other things, conceded that it was "a crime" that the suit had not received better coverage in the *Times*. Yet neither Cole nor anyone else on the financial page felt compelled to rectify the situation.

On June 16, (MORE) called H. Erich Heinemann, assistant to the financial editor of the *Times*, and asked him why the May 23 court decision had not been recorded in the newspaper. He said he was not aware that it hadn't been and that, if true, he would assign a story to correct the matter. As (MORE) went to press on June 23, a month after the court ruling, the *Times* had yet to run a story.

## Pooper Scoop

Turning his thoughts away from "developments on the international war front," William F. Buckley devoted his entire column of May 30 to the "war in New York City between the dog owners and various anti-dog, or more properly anti-dog poop, groups." He started off with a bit of background:

*The issue suddenly burst upon the scene last winter when a middle-aged doctor, coming upon a Doberman Pinscher squatting down on the sidewalk opposite his apartment in Greenwich Village, suddenly found himself reaching into his*

*pocket, pulling out a firearm, and shooting the dog quite, utterly dead.*

*This violence was not senseless, in the opinion of those who understood the doctor's frustration. But the dog lovers, greatly aroused, bore down hard and of course the gentleman will be prosecuted, and no one now believes that the final solution to the dog problem was adumbrated by the incident in Greenwich Village.*

Buckley's source for that item was a February 24 *Village Voice* article written by Stephen Gillers. Entitled "Shot in the Line of Duty," the piece included a statement from the Mayor's office, which read in part: "He is very concerned that this isolated incident not be considered proof that all the city's residents—human and animal—cannot live together. While he understands the rage of the alleged perpetrator, he also wishes the Doberman Pinscher a speedy recovery [the dog was wounded, not killed, as Buckley should have realized from the first graf] and conveys his sympathies to its owner." Gillers also reported that a defense fund had been set up for the beleaguered doctor.

Buckley ended his column by admonishing *The Village Voice* for "publishing a recipe for Sweet and Sour Doberman." Apparently, the clever perpetrator of last summer's Pentagon Paper hoax, who was astonished when everyone seemed to miss the satirical point, is himself as gullible as the next person.

## Campaigning for Research

For a little more than a year now, a group called Citizens for a Better Environment (CBE) has been demonstrating that it's possible to sell investigative reporting door-to-door. In Chicago, where the technique was developed, college students ringing doorbells have been able to raise as much as \$6,000 a week toward the goal of establishing a permanent funding mechanism to subsidize research. CBE also has an office in Los Angeles and has recently arrived in New York, where the response has been especially encouraging—\$20,000 collected just in the two weeks before (MORE) went to press.

Researchers funded by CBE develop their own projects, hire their own staffs and take care of the publishing end themselves. Researcher Dewey Lindstrom, for example, has channeled two exposés of Chicago real estate scandals into the *Daily News* and has written for the *Chicago Journalism Review*. That magazine also ran an investigation of Blue Cross-Blue Shield by CBE researcher Andy Bajonski. There are some who criticize the organization's laissez-faire policy, saying that the projects

lack specific environmental focus. But East Coast president John McKenzie, a former publishing executive who provided CBE with its initial funding, thinks that independence is crucial to the kind of work CBE wants to foster. "In order to get a high-power investigator," he explains, "you have to give him carte blanche."

More significant for the moment than the actual research is the fund-raising strategy. Student-canvassers, paid on a commission basis, are briefed daily on the status of key environmental problems and are told to worry more about what they know than about how they look. McKenzie stresses that this is no "clean-for-Gene" children's crusade. "We have one freaky canvasser who takes in \$200-300 a night," he says. "He has a hypnotic effect on people." But most of the New York area students, who have so far been limiting their search to Queens and Long Island, manage to bring in about \$60 a night, collecting an average of \$3 a household. Soon the canvassers will be able to offer subscriptions to CBE's monthly newsletter, which will publish its first issue this month. In the meantime, McKenzie is seeking a "self-starting, aggressive" individual to head the New York team of investigators. Applicants should contact CBE at 160-16 Jamaica Avenue, Jamaica, N.Y. 11432.

## Regrets

A number of critics of the A. J. Liebling Counter-Convention have called attention to the shortage of management representation on the various panels. For the record, we invited A. M. Rosenthal, managing editor of the *Times*; Michael O'Neill, managing editor of the *Daily News*, and the three top men at the *Post*—Warren Hoge, city editor; Bob Spitzer, managing editor and Paul Sann, executive editor.

O'Neill responded cordially to the invitation, but said that he would unfortunately be tied up at the American Newspaper Publishers Association on the day we had asked him to participate. Hoge initially said he would be too "busy putting out the paper" to attend, but later indicated he had been told by Sann he could not be spared from his duties, a dictum that doubtless applied to Spitzer. Sann himself never bothered to respond to our invitation at all. Rosenthal, who was asked to appear on a panel discussing what kind of afternoon newspaper New York should have (because he headed the task force at the *Times* that investigated the possibility of starting one a few years ago), replied by letter: "Thank you for your invitation to appear on the panel. I would rather not."

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# Tom Wolfe. . .

continued from page 11

I think what really started to happen in the 1960's was this: certain people found out that while they were working on newspapers and magazines they could write non-fiction that sounded like a novel. Actually, this was the most complete homage to the novel and to those supreme literary artists, the novelists, because the idea was to dress up like the novelist for a little while, write non-fiction that sounded like a short story or like a novel, and then still the idea was that you were going to move on and do a novel. Well, the irony was that certain people, such as Gay Talese over here on my left, became so good at this, at using these non-fiction forms that were like a novel, that by now this form, which is now known as the new journalism, has really wiped out the novel as literature's main event. It has not replaced it, but it has certainly cut down the supreme status of the novel as the holy of holies in literature. Now, technically what this has meant is this: people had always looked at the novel as a form that

**Wolfe: I think what started to happen in the 1960's was that more and more writers .. began to discover that in non-fiction, with the strictest adherence to journalistic canons, they could use every effective device known to prose.**

achieves certain effects; particularly it was the novel that really had the exclusive power to involve the reader emotionally, to draw the reader into a kind of inner world of the writer's own making. The traditional essay had always been the form in which the dazzling insight was put forth, the kind of tremendous powers of analysis, etc. And far down the line had always been journalism, whose only offering was sort of hard facts that could be used by these people of higher attainment, the novelist and the traditional essayist.

I think what started to happen during the 1960's was that more and more writers—so many of them that it became like a movement—began to discover that in non-fiction, with the strictest adherence to journalistic canons, they could use every effective device known to prose—whether it was the traditional idea of the insight and rhetorical figures of the essay or whether it was the most sophisticated use of stream-of-consciousness point-of-view and things that had been thought to be confined only to the novel. And I think that once writers began to discover that they could do this in non-fiction, then suddenly journalism—all forms of non-fiction—took on a tremendous appeal. And I don't think that young writers any longer have the obsession, which I had when I left college and which I think most people my age had, which was that if you were going to write there was only one thing to do which was to write a novel. I think the excitement has shifted into non-fiction now.

**Kael:** I do think the novel is perhaps less crucial in our period, but I don't think the new journalism should really take the credit or the blame for that. Television and the movies I think have been the principal factors. It is true that people are reading a great deal of non-fiction now, but it is not necessarily the new journalism that they are reading. The difficulty about the new journalism is, I think, the claims that are made for it. Most of us would acknowledge the quality of some of the writing of Tom Wolfe, of Gay Talese, of Al Goldman and others. It's writing in a particular area, however. They are marvelous at capturing new lifestyles, at evoking the spirit of new movements, but they are almost totally inadequate and uninterested in doing political reporting, in dealing with national or international affairs, in doing critical writing. In fact, their approach is basically non-critical; certainly Tom Wolfe's is. And that has been the problem that many of us have had with it. That is, it's a turn-on writing that gets inside, and you are left not knowing how to feel about it except to be excited about it.

Now this is very attractive to the young particularly, because the same way they go for movies that have intensity and excitement, they like writing that has intensity and excitement. But it leaves them with no basis at all for evaluating the material, and ultimately it simply means that the writing has to go from one charge to the next. Now whether these men are failed novelists or found that their writing took the place of novel-writing for them is, I think, irrelevant. The question for us is whether this is an adequate form of journalism for dealing with the issues that most of us are interested in. And I think it's not.

**Wolfe:** Just a couple of points. I think, for one thing, it is not a form that has not covered major events. I mean, for my money, the best thing that has been written in any form, fiction or non-fiction, about the war in Vietnam was Mike Herr's articles on Khesanh in *Esquire*. These were written by a man who went to Khesanh for nine days at the height of the siege, went into the trenches—which was about the only way you could survive, it turned out—and wrote a piece from the inside out, in other words trying to really penetrate the central nervous system of the line soldier and I think you got a picture of the horror of the war that is really much more intense than anything that anyone such as a conventional, critical, moralistic essayist like Mary McCarthy, or anyone else, even came close to. I happen to know that Mary McCarthy's and Mike Herr's opinions about the war are probably not too far apart. I probably shouldn't speak for either one, but they are probably not too far apart. But one wrote from the inside and was able to really give you a feeling about war that makes you understand what it really is about. And to say that this kind of writing is not critical, does not enable you to make critical evaluations, would be to make the same charge about Balzac, about Dickens or about any people whose main motive, whose main purpose is to get inside the central nervous systems of the people that they are writing about. That is what the value is, and I think it's far easier to write critically, to write moralistically, because it's far easier simply to play God from the outset rather than to try to get inside the people you are writing about.

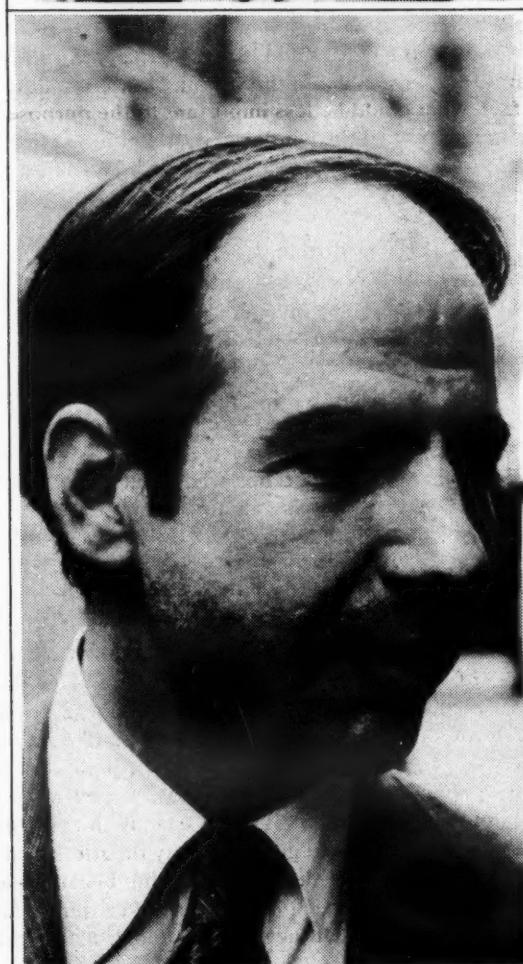
**DeMott:** I want to stick with this for just one minute more, Tom, because I don't think that you were quite responsive to one part of Pauline's question, which I think we are all interested in, namely, the question about telling or helping the reader or the perceiver to value, to see, not just to feel from within but to set the feelings in some kind of hierarchy. That is, in some sense to say what ought to be felt. Do you feel that is a function of the person you describe as a new journalist or is there some kind of detachment from the question of evaluation?

**Wolfe:** Well, I think what you are talking about is a secondary form of writing, actually. It's sermon-like in purpose any way that you approach it. And I think it's far more difficult and far more valuable to give a reader an opportunity both to see all of the facts in a conventional sense and to feel what is going on in the emotions of the people that you're writing about. In the same sense that someone like Dostoevski makes you feel the terror of crime both on the part of the criminal and the victim. He's not telling you that crime is evil. In fact, what could be less important to the purpose that he has? He wants you to understand the whole process. I'm not saying that there is now a great Dostoevskian tradition in the new journalism, but that's what it's aiming at.

**Trillin:** I'm not sure that I agree with that criticism about what people cover. I agree pretty much that there was a tradition in American papers that a feature writer was somebody who could go tell you what the first day of spring was like, but who really couldn't be trusted with man's work. I'm not saying it was true. Liebling was a feature writer and Joe Mitchell [of *The New Yorker*] was a feature writer. I don't mean that was necessarily fair. There was a feeling that anybody who was interested in "writing" on a paper was a kind of a lightweight and was probably a lousy reporter anyway, and it really didn't make any difference what a lady, overhead in the park, said about the first warm day, and that real men on the paper didn't want to be novelists at all but wanted to be the head of the Washington bureau.

What often bothers me about the new journalism is that in trying to do these things, the temptation to go beyond an honest effort to get at the truth is sometimes very great. And we are all human. A lot of times when I read a story that's roughly new journalism—and I agree that it doesn't make any difference what you call it—I think of these airplane theories I get. I get fantastic theories on airplanes. I go out and do a story every three weeks, and when I get on a plane and I have a couple of drinks and I haven't been to the place yet, I get marvelous theories about what the whole story is going to amount to. I can put people exactly in categories, and then when I get there I always have to give up all my theories. And it's often very difficult to give them up, or I should say painful, because particularly if I'm going to New Mexico or some place, they are very polished by the time I get off the plane. And now that there's not a two-drink limit, I'm just brilliant by the time I get to New Mexico.

I sometimes tell my wife about them if I call her when I get in and then when she reads the piece she says, "what ever happened to that brilliant theory that summed the whole thing up?" And it just turned out that that theory wasn't true. That is, that out of the reporting it didn't work out that way. Now I'm not saying that the theory I came up with out of the reporting necessarily is always true. But I think that one of the differences between the old and the new journalist, and this partly comes from the



*New journalism  
panelists clockwise  
from top left: Tom  
Wolfe, Gay Talese,  
Gail Sheehy, Pauline  
Kael, Renata Adler  
and Wolfe, and Calvin  
Trillin*

*Photos by Jill  
Krementz*



style of the 1960's, is that there's a difference in the accountability toward truth and how embarrassed you would be if someone said, "Hey, guy, I was there and that is all wrong." And it's not just an error or a wrong date or something like that, but that the *impression* you got in your impressionistic portrait is wrong because everything you based it on is wrong. I too often get the feeling that it's not considered a serious charge to say, "That isn't true." Or if you say "well, this isn't true and this isn't true and this isn't true," then they say it's nit-picking but the impression is still right, the thrust is still right. Yet I look at the thrust without everything that supposedly supports it and I see one of my airplane theories. And I think that the difference is that if someone showed an old journalist his errors, he would be terribly embarrassed and probably slink off. But this would not be considered a terrible embarrassment for a new journalist. I don't think that's a universal charge. I am merely saying that the tendency and the temptation are there. What you have to remember is that new journalism is not just Tom Wolfe or Gay Talese. New journalism is also that guy who's been told he's a lightweight—he's been told ten years ago—because he is

**Adler: What (the new journalist) is really doing is writing public relations. Even stylistically one sees this p.r. copy coming out . . . a lot of zippy prose about inconsequential people which doesn't . . . derive from a journalistic tradition at all.**

interested in "writing" and therefore is reporting on the first day of spring. But now he's a new journalist. And he's a different guy. He's got flashier clothes and he writes in a different way. I am persuaded that Gay Talese based what he wrote about *The New York Times* on many years of being at *The New York Times* and investigation and that kind of thing. I'm merely saying that the temptations in new journalism are great and the reaction when the temptations are pointed out is different from the old journalism.

**Sheehy:** I'd like to add to what the new journalism is to the new journalists, that it's very hard. About seven years ago I wrote a short story in fiction which then was turned by the efforts of an editor into a magazine piece, non-fiction. That was a very interesting experience and I don't think I've ever gotten out of standing between two chairs. The editor told me at that time, "The reason you write is to understand what you live." Which was quite true in that case; I was trying to write about the disintegration of a marriage, and it happened to be my own. In the last seven years I have grown, happily somewhat beyond total fascination with contemplation of my own navel, and I now try to concern myself with understanding what other people are living in terms of class conflict, race conflict, lifestyle, coming to grips with women's lib, coming to grips still with marriage and divorce, etc. And I find that to do this most effectively, to communicate and relate to the experience of readers, is to present a good story—people remember a good story. They remember what they felt for a set of characters who were involved in a life experience. I see the normal journalistic style as a collection of facts and correctly spelled names and perhaps incidents and police interviews and quotes sprinkled through from experts, which gives you about as much of a feeling for what the experience is really like as reading a police blotter.

I think there is a great deal of confusion between the new journalism and the think piece, or what used to be called the think piece and is now usually slugged "advocacy journalism." And I think that most of these newspapers are mostly filled with advocacy journalism, which substitutes a dead general idea for a live specific impression. It's usually a presentation of the writer's ideology, as viewed strongly through his own hang-ups. And I've been guilty of almost doing that, and probably have done it sometimes, and this is where Calvin Trillin's description of having his plane impressions blasted on the first five minutes of an interview is valid. You have to be willing to put up with that, with having your fondest ideas blown out. Otherwise you shouldn't start trying to write the story, because you really aren't going to present anything to the readers except what they already know you think.

So in striving for presenting live specific impressions, you go in with the form in mind—or I do—you go in looking for dialogue, for scenes, for illuminations that will directly recreate the experience of being this character or being this set of characters involved in a life experience. You go in looking for a *story*. Mr. Talese can do it with dead people. He just finds those who were associated with the dead people and gets them—hammers away and gets them to describe what they were wearing,

what they said, how the wallpaper looked, how those people in that room felt when they were plotting the death of some gangland character. I've done the same thing with trying to understand how prostitutes or pimps feel about their own work. I wasn't willing to become them to find out, but short of that the only thing I could find to do was to follow them around, spend a great deal of time—what Tom Wolfe calls "saturation reporting"—in being on the street at the hours they are on the street, from midnight to 7 a.m., and going into the hotels they use, talking to the pimps who run them, talking to the madams who run them, talking to the street people who have seen them every day and every night for the past five years, the doormen, the countermen, the pizza guy, you know. What you can't find out through present observation you have to try and fill in through a source, a resource, who has watched them everyday for the past five years, or every night. The idea in the end, I hope, is applicable to following politicians or to presenting a contemporary idea or an important world problem with immediacy that readers can relate to—never themselves, perhaps, having been on the battlefield, never themselves, perhaps, having followed a candidate on a nationwide campaign trip.

**Kael:** I think the danger in this is if these techniques are then applied to wider spheres. The danger so far in the new criticism, or rather the new journalism, has been in assuming that this was a higher form of journalism and that it really replaced older forms of journalism. I think there is room for the new journalism as a highly advanced, novelistic form of the human interest story, but if you start applying these same techniques, I mean if you want the looks of people and all this personality gunk in political and national and international affairs, then I think we have something really dangerous, because then people are judged totally on the basis of their style.

**DeMott:** Since are coming back and forth here, can I ask either Gay or Tom to respond to the points about accountability that came first from Bud Trillin and then from Gay Sheehy and now from Pauline. What do you consider your accountability, Tom, as a new journalist—different from an old journalist, or what?

**Wolfe:** I think you should be held as accountable as any journalist, traditional or otherwise, and as a matter of fact in the long run you are holding yourself more accountable because you are doing a more complete job of reporting. In some cases, for example, you are trying to report on people's thought simply by asking them what they thought in a particular situation. Or you are trying to get all sorts of very specific details of dress or furniture and this sort of thing.

**Adler:** When we talk about the new journalism, there are two kinds of thing that come up. One is journalism using all the talents of the writer, limited only by the facts and by accountability. That is, he brings to bear the form that is given to him, and what he, to the best of his knowledge, knows to be true. Then he brings to bear all the powers that he's got. This is novelistic reporting, and we've had it for years. We've had it from Wolcott Gibbs, from Lillian Ross, all the way to Truman Capote, all of whom happen to have worked for a magazine with which I am associated, but there have been others. So that's one kind of new journalism which I think is very important, I mean forming things in a way that gets into the realm of art. But the other form of journalism has its genesis not in fiction, not in feature writing, not in punditry even, but in a very unlikely source, which is public relations. This journalism usually begins with fairly minor subjects, such as arriviste Jews with public relations experts. The journalist rises with the unimportance of some celebrity who comes along, and what he is really doing is writing public relations. Even stylistically one sees this p.r. copy coming out. I mean, it's rather tedious to keep reading normal journalism, daily press releases and stuff. You have to stick with the facts, you have to weigh them. The new journalism, on the other hand, is a lot of zippy prose about inconsequential people which doesn't seem to me to derive from a journalistic tradition at all, or even a tradition in fiction. It may be more a tradition of poetry, if you think of p.r. as poetry. I mean somebody goes out and he's stimulated to write a poem on the subject of what was going on in somebody's head, who, as it turns out if you boringly check the facts, wasn't there, was dead, was not thinking. It worries me, it worries me that all these things should be included in the category of new journalism.

**Wolfe:** I really don't know what you're talking about. But the thing that I do hear over and over again, and we've heard it twice this morning, is the idea that people writing within the new journalism have chosen subjects that are not serious. This goes back to a really ancient bias, on the part of journalists particularly, that the only serious subjects are catastrophic threats: namely, war, enslavement, poverty, famine and pestilence.

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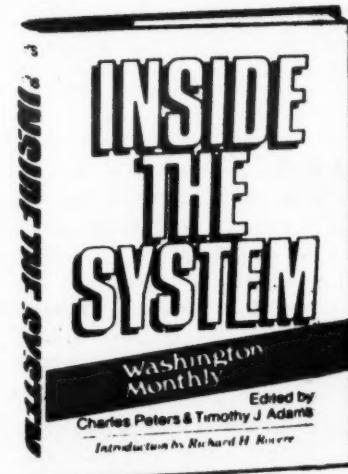
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**Adler:** And radical chic [the title of Wolfe's article in *New York* magazine on the Leonard Bernstein party for the Black Panthers].

**Wolfe:** Radical chic would be something that is a very good example, as a matter of fact, because it would cut across categories that are both serious and non-serious. This is the whole point of the piece, as a matter of fact.

**Talese:** I don't exactly know where I stand on this. I find myself siding with Tom, then with Bud and Renata. I find myself not wishing to involve myself in the witticisms and the clever attacks or put-downs that seem to be going on here. I think further that though I am associated with this so-called new journalistic movement, I don't agree with much of what's going on in this movement. As to my colleague, Gail Sheehy, I don't really think that having a composite character, as she did in some of her reporting on prostitution, is in the best interest of what we might be able to do in the way of advancing journalism. All I think new journalism is reporting, it's leg-work, it's finding what is to be found and having it verifiable. When we're inaccurate, and if we are inaccurate, we pay the price with our reputation. I do not consider myself anything but a journalist, old or new; I do my homework and I stand, or do not, by my record as an accurate reporter. I did it with my *New York Times* book, and with whatever else I do, and I really don't always like to be part of a group that has a contemporary tag, as I think new journalism does.

## Exploits of. . .

continued from page 1

to make its own surveys of potential gas reserves in this immense area of the public domain. Instead, now as in the past, Government agencies rely on the American Gas Association, the industry trade group, for statistics on gas reserves. These statistics indicate reserves are declining. The petroleum industry, led by Jersey Standard, the largest producer of gas and oil in the western hemisphere, insists that the only way to increase gas reserves is to increase gas prices, thereby affording the petroleum industry an incentive to drill.

In recent years, the industry's claims of shortage have met with some skepticism. In testimony before Congress, one independent economist, Bruce Netschert, reported that the gas producers had found 500 new wells in the Louisiana Gulf, then shut them off, never connecting the gas to market. In addition, much gas is withheld from the big interstate market, where prices are regulated by the Federal Power Commission, and instead committed to the intrastate markets where prices are not regulated, and therefore higher. That helps to create the specter of a gas shortage, particularly in the East Coast and California markets, which are dependent on the interstate pipelines. Last year, the staff of the Federal Power Commission found discrepancies in the industry's reserve statistics and asked the commission's permission to conduct an impartial, independent study of the nation's reserves. The industry protested this move, on the grounds that the companies would be compelled to reveal confidential reserve data which, if made public, would place them at competitive disadvantage. The FPC sided with the industry, *denied* the staff authority to make a comprehensive survey and, accepting the oil company argument, began to increase gas prices as an incentive to drill. At the same time, it introduced a publicity gimmick, called a natural gas survey, which involves "advisory" committees made up of public members but which will continue to rely heavily on the American Gas Association's data.

Thus, the extent of the gas shortage cannot be known because the industry, including Jersey Standard, has opposed an open, public study of gas reserves. Until Jersey Standard and the other major gas producers open their books and records to the general public, statements contained in the Esso ad about the "critically scarce" gas shortage are self-serving. There may well be an energy crisis, but by obstructing independent inquiry into natural gas reserves, Jersey Standard is contributing to that crisis.

**W**hile this advertisement deceives in seeking to establish basic assumptions, it also creates distortions in more specific ways. In discussing the cost of drilling offshore, for example, Esso argues:

Even if our geophysical and geological findings indicate a good chance of oil or natural gas under the ocean floor, drilling is still a long way off.

Next we have to obtain the right to drill. There may be lengthy public hearings of government studies prior to the bidding for leases.

In areas considered highly prospective, competitors for the leases can put hundreds of millions of dollars into public coffers. Oil companies must also pay royalties on every barrel of oil and every cubic foot of gas produced. In recent years, offshore lease bonuses and royalties paid to state and federal treasuries have averaged over \$800 million per year.

In fact, there has been a battle within the Federal Government over the relatively small amounts of money the big oil companies pay for oil leases. As the ad says, there "may be" lengthy public hearings or government studies prior to the bidding for leases. Actually most of the Government "studies" of mineral resources are based on company data, and are not really studies at all, but recitations by the Government of the way the oil industry sees things.

Fishery experts at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency scoff at the ad's claim that the drilling platforms are a boon to marine life. They point out that simply because fish congregate around "artificial reefs" does not mean there is an increase in the fish population, as the ad suggests. The Government people worry that if there is a blowout or major

### Promises to Keep

"We can't promise we'll never have a damaging accident," concedes the last paragraph of the Esso advertisement. "But we can promise that as long as we work offshore we'll operate in the most responsible way we know how."

Item: In November, 1970, the U.S. Justice Department accused Jersey Standard of 150 misdemeanors for knowing failure to operate safety devices on 33 offshore wells in the Gulf of Mexico. The company pleaded no contest and was fined \$300,000.

Item: In July, 1970, more than 67,000 gallons of oil spilled into Baltimore harbor when company dock workers failed to stop the flow of oil into a barge after it had been filled. The company was fined.

Item: In February, 1970, the Delian Apollon dumped 10,000 gallons of heavy oil that created a 25-mile slick when it grounded in Florida's Tampa Bay. That same month, the Arrow spilled 2.1 million barrels of residual oil when it ran aground in Chedabucto Bay, Nova Scotia. The spill marred 75 miles of shoreline and floated as far as 110 miles out to sea. In both incidents, the tankers were under lease to Esso.

Item: In January, 1971, the tanker Esso Gettysburg spilled 8,600 barrels of oil when it ran aground in the Long Island Sound near New Haven, Conn.

Item: Over the past three years, Jersey Standard tankers were fined seven times under the Refuse Act for smaller spills in U.S. waters.

J.R.

spill, the fish which have congregated around the platform may be quickly wiped out. Indeed, the platform can become a trap for the fish.

The ad also discusses blowout preventers, "highly important safety devices [that] close off the space between the drill pipe and the casing in a matter of seconds if unexpectedly high pressures are met, and contain these pressures until normal drilling can be resumed. . ." Blowout preventers, however, have not always worked as expected. At Santa Barbara, for instance, where the disastrous blowout occurred in 1969, the crew shut the blowout preventers, and thereby presumably brought the blowout under control. But with surface escape shut off, the well built up pressure below the point where the surface casing stopped, and as pressure increased, the oil burst sideways and out of the well into layers of bedrock. From there it pushed upwards, buckling the ocean floor and seeping into the sea bed. In that case the blowout preventers worsened the situation, resulting in the well going out of control beneath the ocean floor. It remains out of control to this day, seeping between five and 15 barrels a day.

Esso insists that Santa Barbara "taught us all a painful lesson" [the 1969 blowout did not occur at a Jersey Standard platform], but quickly goes on to allow that "some of the after-effects seem to have been exaggerated. A research team from the University of California confirmed there was no lasting damage to sea growth, marine life, or beaches as a result of the spill." Actually the research report does not reach this conclusion at all. The reference is to a two-volume report entitled, "Biological and Oceanographical Survey of the Santa Barbara Channel Oil Spill, 1969-1970." It was published by the Allan Hancock Foundation of the University of Southern California and was made possible by a grant from the Western Oil and Gas Association, a trade group whose members originally

badgered the Interior Department into leasing the Santa Barbara channel.

The study involved field studies, which at the longest lasted 12 months. Most of the scientific reports are inconclusive. For example, a paper on the effects of the oil spill on zooplankton states that it is impossible to reach conclusions without comparative data stretching over several seasons. The report on benthic fauna concludes there was a general decline in the population over 10 years in the area where oil drilling was carried out, but that it is impossible to tell the reasons for the decline. A report on sedentary species shows that some declined in numbers after the spill, while others were undisturbed. There was little adverse effect on the fish catch, but admittedly fewer people fished after the spill because of all the bad publicity, and the fish catch may not be the best way to tell about the fish population. In general, the report concluded that longer studies were needed, and that it was too soon to tell long term effects.

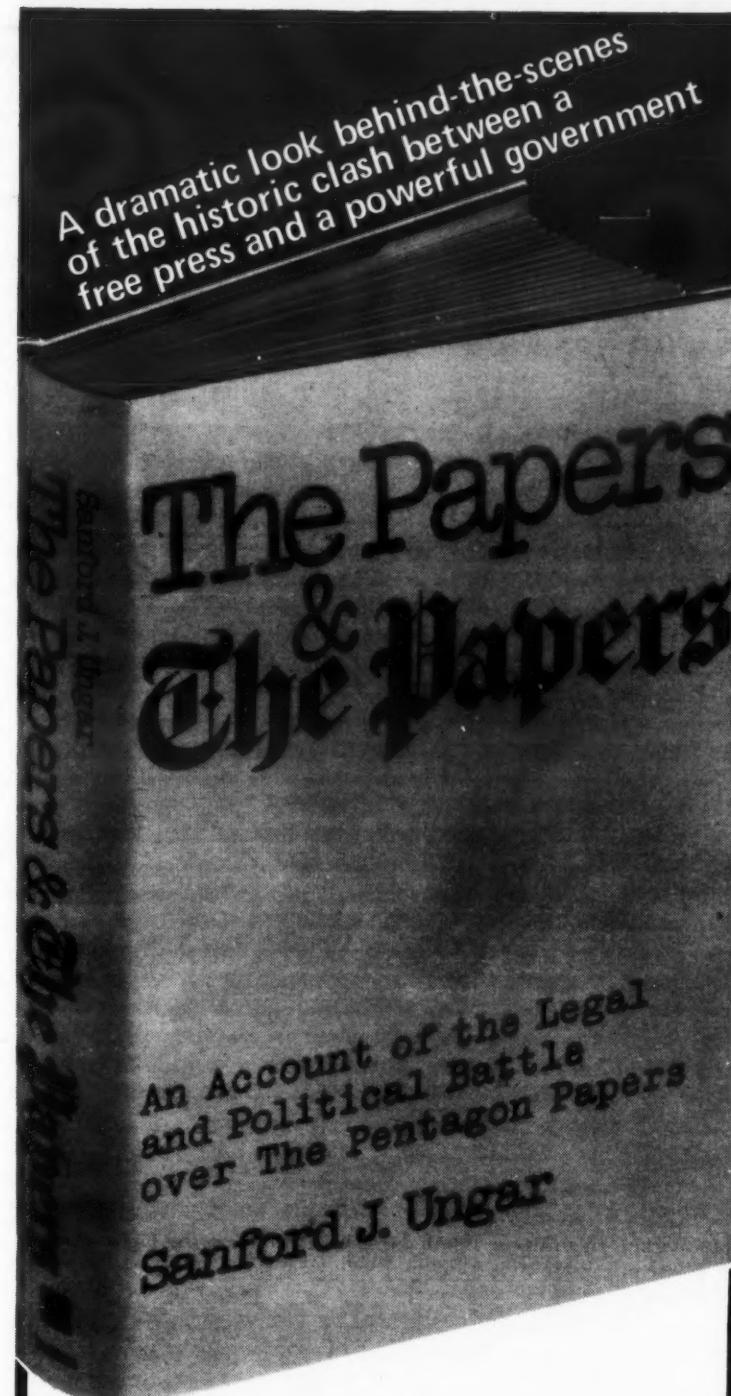
At another point, the ad declares that "both private industry and the U.S. Coast Guard are now working on a large variety of oil containment and recovery systems to minimize the damage caused by blowouts or spills. Where containment and recovery are impractical, research has developed nontoxic dispersants and biodegrading agents to assist in cleaning up." This is a misleading statement since the techniques for containing oil spills are not particularly effective and, while there is research underway, it holds no special promise of containing spills. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, there has been modest success with one boom system in the Gulf of Mexico. The boom is used to funnel the oil into a skimmer which can separate the oil from water. But the booms have never been used in anything but calm seas, and have not proved effective in wind or high waves.

The Coast Guard is testing a boom in five-foot seas, but this boom has not actually contained anything in such seas. So far the best it has been able to do is contain vegetable oil in two-foot waves. Also the boom is of dubious use when the current runs over one knot. The effectiveness of booms also depends on the temperature of water and the consistency of oil, among other factors. As for dispersants, EPA oil containment officials are against them. There are no standards against which dispersants can be judged, and the Coast Guard is just now trying to establish such standards.

Max Blumer, senior scientist in the Department of Chemistry at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, summed up the situation in regard to oil spills: "Compared to the number and size of accidents and disasters, the present counter-measures are inadequate. Thus, in spite of considerable improvement in skimming efficiency since the Santa Barbara accident, only 10 per cent of the oil spilled from the Chevron well in the Gulf of Mexico (1970) was recovered. From an ecological point of view, this gain is nearly meaningless. While we remain hopeful that the gross esthetic damage from oil spills may be avoided in the future, there is no reason to be hopeful that existing or planned counter-measures will eliminate the biological impacts of oil pollution."

As the advertisement suggests, the serious question in oil and gas comes down to consumption. In the case of natural gas that has ironic overtones for Jersey Standard because the company and its subsidiaries are not only the largest producers of gas in the U.S., but major consumers as well. According to a study made for the Office of Science and Technology, industry is the largest user of natural gas—not home-owners or electric utilities, the groups commonly viewed as potential victims of the big gas shortage. Industry, in fact, consumes twice as much gas as residential users, who are the second largest category. Electric utilities, which have sought gas to meet air pollution requirements, are third in terms of usage. Within the industrial sector, two groups account for one-quarter of the total; they are the petroleum and chemical industries. And these two categories overlap because petroleum companies are also major producers of chemicals. Industry uses natural gas mostly as a boiler fuel, to create steam or heat. It can be substituted for other fossil fuels. The use of gas is particularly prevalent in the southwest in oil refineries. Refineries use natural gas in the manufacture of various oil products, the most common of which is gasoline. Consequently, the industrial organizations clamoring most furiously about the energy crisis are themselves prime users of these scarce fuels. When Jersey Standard talks of "vital considerations of continued economic growth," it is talking in part of its own growth, its abilities to produce more gasoline and more chemicals.

Serious solution to an "energy crisis" must involve an investigation of alternate fuels, and technologies that use other fuels. When it comes to natural gas, that means an examination of how much natural gas is used in the manufacture of motor vehicles, by taking into account the amounts of the fuel consumed by such industries as oil, chemical, metals. It may be possible to reduce markedly the amounts of gas used by changing around technologies in the automobile industry, by adopting different engine systems or relying more and more on mass transit instead of the automobile.



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**What Jersey Standard appears to seek through its advertisement is a softening of public opinion for a major industrial realignment on the East Coast. It is part of a massive, long term campaign to create a pliable public opinion that will allow . . . an entire new industrial framework (on) the populous eastern seaboard.**

The advertisement also flits past oil import quotas, the major political issue confronting the oil industry. It says:

If the U.S. is to minimize dependence on foreign energy sources as much of our oil and gas as possible must come from domestic supplies. But it is increasingly more difficult to find oil and gas reserves on land.

That leaves the offshore areas, where the prospects for finding additional oil and gas deposits are quite encouraging. Geologists estimate the recoverable reserves of oil underlying our continental shelf may be more than the U.S. has consumed in its history. The outlook for natural gas also appears excellent, particularly along the East Coast.

The oil import quotas, first imposed by President Eisenhower in the 1950's, were meant to protect the domestic oil business from an influx of cheap foreign oil, which supposedly would run down prices, putting the oil men out of business and thereby endangering national security. Over the years the quotas have served as a device to promote the domestic industry by assuring higher than world market prices; they also are a part of an international market mechanism through which the major multinational oil companies could direct Middle Eastern oil to markets they want to develop in Europe and Japan. While the quota program remains in existence, the Administration is undercutting it by allowing importation of increasing quantities of foreign oil to make up the difference between domestic supply and market demand. Still, the oil can only dribble in at a rate that assures sustained domestic prices, and a level of demand which results in keeping pressure on Congress to increase domestic drilling so as to provide sufficient supplies. But the issue is less one of dependence on "foreign energy sources" than it is of ordering international oil markets in such a way that the international companies can control supply and demand in the interest of profits.

In recent months, the Federal Power Commission, with approval of the White House and Defense Department, issued initial approval for importation of large supplies of liquified natural gas (LNG) from Algeria to East Coast ports, a move which eventually will tie some 10 per cent of the East Coast's gas supply to this third world "revolutionary" government. The Administration views this immense deal as a major step in winning the Algerians, with whom we don't even enjoy diplomatic relations, away from the Soviet Union, and linking the country's economic growth to the U.S. In fact, it seems clear that substantial portions of future gas will be supplied by oil companies in new LNG tanker ships. Contrary to what the ad says, these ships are increasingly competitive with pipelines and there are entire navies of them under construction. Moreover, LNG deals are proposed or under negotiation between U.S. companies and other North African nations, as well as the Soviet Union, Nigeria and Venezuela. The result of all this is twofold: to allow just enough foreign oil to trickle in to meet domestic demand without injuring the carefully-nurtured price structure. This process reinforces the impression of an energy crisis, which in turn puts pressure on the Government to allow drilling for oil and gas on the outer-continental shelf.

So far explored areas include a small section of the shelf off California and a larger swath in the Gulf of Mexico, off Louisiana and Texas. Now the oil companies are inching eastward in the Gulf, in hopes of eventually exploring around the tip of Florida and in the Atlantic Ocean off Long Island, New Jersey and Cape Hatteras, North Carolina. Last year Mobil hit gas at Sable Island off Nova Scotia, which increased speculation over the existence of petroleum off the East Coast. Jersey Standard is a member of a consortium which conducted studies along the East Coast shelf off Long Island. According to initial reports, all signs were propitious for oil. The oil industry is mounting increasing pressure on the government to lease the Atlantic shelf, and the Interior Department is expected to begin leasing between 1974 and 1976. Before doing so, however, it must await the Supreme Court's decision as to New England

states' claims to jurisdiction of the outer shelf, claims based on old colonial grants.

Drilling off the East Coast involves the industry in what can turn out to be significant political opposition, and for good reason. The most likely areas for exploration are 30 miles off the tip of Long Island and on the Georges Bank, the center of the international fishing industry. Establishment of oil drilling platforms and their possible damaging effects on fish populations will be a major problem. Spills from pipelines, tankers, or other oil installations along the populous East Coast with its many bays and sounds could well have devastating effects. A major spill in the Long Island Sound, one of the places the oil companies want to construct a superport, would be a catastrophe. The oil would be trapped in the sound and foul all the shores. Up and down the East Coast, oil-drilling in the ocean would mean a proliferation of pipelines, refineries, deep water transhipment ports, harbors for super tankers, etc.

What the Jersey Standard appears to seek through its advertisement is a softening of public opinion for a major industrial realignment on the East Coast. It is part of a massive, long term campaign to create a pliable public opinion that will allow the petroleum companies to establish an entire new industrial framework onto the populous eastern seaboard. It may well be that this is a necessity, but there has been no independent analysis of oil and gas reserves on the outer-continental shelf off the East Coast or elsewhere in the United States. Nor is there any analysis of current or projected end uses of fuels which would make possible any sort of rational decision on fuels production or use.

## [HELLBOX]

continued from page 2

New York Post, picked up a badminton set. When asked if she planned to keep her television set, Reckert replied: "Are you kidding? I certainly am!" Ward would neither confirm nor deny that he had new shuttlecocks these days. "No comment," he said curtly.

Most major corporations similarly court the financial press, of course. But ITT seems to do it with particular persistence. In August, for example, the firm is renting out the Nutley playground—as it does every year—to the New York Financial Writers Association for its annual picnic.

## Brussels Boys' Club

Annual Report 1972



And then there's the Brussels Boys Club, a slice of corporate wit centering on the bronze statue of the little boy peeing in Brussels (home of ITT's European headquarters). Each year the financial writers gather for dinner with the ITT folk, who dispense gag beer mugs or golf putters or cuff links bearing likenesses of the statue. This April's affair, at the St. Regis Hotel, also boasted, in the words of one guest, "two of the worst comedians I have ever heard in my life." Maybe next year ITT should sign up Jack Anderson or Dita Beard.

## The Counter-Convention (cont'd)

Lest there be any confusion about the critical need for fundamental reform in American journalism, we offer as Exhibit A this month the cases of Pat McBroom and David Fitzpatrick. Both were fired for attending and then writing about the A.J. Liebling Counter-Convention sponsored by (MORE) in late April.

McBroom, who had been a science writer on the *Philadelphia Inquirer* for three years, was dismissed for habitual tardiness on June 8 at 6 P.M., less than an hour after managing editor John McMullan's secretary was seen carrying two issues of the June *Philadelphia Journalism Review* back to his office. In her lead piece about the counter-convention, "Seeds of Revolution," McBroom had written of the event: "Behind the egos, insults, claptrap and camp followers, came the clear signs that a journalistic movement has begun—one that will challenge not only the conventional methods of handling the news, but the autocratic powers of editors as well."

Fitzpatrick, an often praised and award-winning education reporter on *The Arizona Republic*, was told on May 22 by managing editor Harold Milks that he was no longer welcome on the paper because he was a bad influence on morale. In addition to the sin of writing about the counter-convention in *The New Times*, the weekly alternative media newspaper in Phoenix, Fitzpatrick also outraged the management by helping to edit a recent article in *The Nation* that was in some respects critical of *The Republic*. In an open letter in *The New Times* addressed to Eugene Pulliam, the arch-conservative owner of *The Republic*, Fitzpatrick wrote: "Nowhere, it appears, is there room [at the newspaper] for reporters to honestly and reasonably disagree. We may write letters to the editor but we are discouraged from suggesting or writing columns that differ from the newspaper's stated viewpoints. If there is no room in a newspaper for honest disagreements, then it seems to me we are indeed walking a thin line between the freedom you so rightly espouse and the heavy-handedness that comes from stifling of expression."

When we called Harold Milks to ask why David Fitzpatrick had been fired, he first told us "it really is none of your business." But then he icily advised us that "Fitzpatrick was dismissed for refusing to acknowledge that he owed any obligation and any loyalty to the people who were paying him." Pat McBroom's boss, on the other hand, was positively palsy-walsy. John McMullan said he was all for improving journalism and denied that McBroom had been fired for her views. In fact, he denied it "categorically." But when pressed to say why she was let go, he said it was all in the notice the newspaper sent her. That notice gave as the reason her tardiness, a subject McMullan refused to discuss. "I consider it an internal, personal matter," he explained.

The Philadelphia local of *The Newspaper Guild* is filing a grievance on McBroom's behalf. But Fitzpatrick does not even have that small consolation since *The Republic* is a non-union shop. Both reporters, of course, are looking for jobs.

## Failing Newspaper Act

Washington and New York are the last two cities with as many as three separately owned dailies. Soon, New York may stand alone. Rumors are rife in the capital that the *Evening Star* and Scripps-Howard's *Daily News* are far along in negotiations for joint operation under the *Newspaper Preservation Act*, which permits "failing" papers to consolidate circulation, production and advertising with immunity to anti-trust prosecution.

Both papers are currently money-losing propositions. Operated jointly, with the tabloid *Daily News* as an A.M. and the *Star* the exclusive P.M., they could cut costs and offer advertisers a combined circulation approaching the *Post's*. *Star* Editor Newbold Noyes denies everything. News Managing Editor Richard Hollander says "All I know is the rumors I hear—the same ones you hear." The Justice Department, which reportedly has already been sounded out by the pro-administration *Star* and *Daily News*, denies everything, with the following logic: *Department*: "There is no truth to those rumors." *Reporter*: "Is that sort of information public? If there had been approaches, could you tell me?" *Department*: "No, we would normally keep it confidential. But I can assure you that there is no truth to those rumors."

## Don't Look Back

The *Boston Herald Traveler* went out of business June 18 after 125 years of publication, but its final issue that Sunday was something less than a swan song. In fact, the only editorial acknowledgement of the paper's demise was buried in a letter headlined, *HAS LIKED US SINCE 1939*, in which a suburban reader wished the paper "continued success" in its "new incarnation." In the editorial column, where one might have ex-

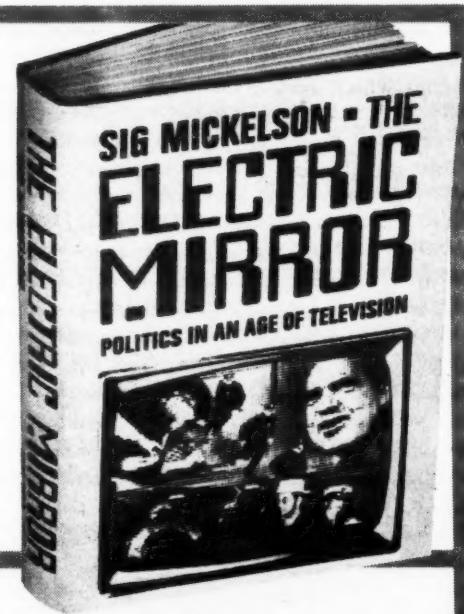
pected *Herald Traveler* Corporation president and frequent editorialist Harold E. Clancy to have offered a few nostalgic thoughts, there was instead a diatribe against the "radical" ideology of Presidential candidate George McGovern. The sole announcement of the new regime appeared in a full-page ad on the back of the "Viewpoint" section.

The following day, the *Herald* was merged with the Hearst tabloid, the *Record American*. The new conglomeration (billed as, "TWO FOR ONE: Boston's 2 Great Newspapers / Now One Greater Newspaper") has the cumbersome name of *Boston Herald Traveler and Record American* in the morning and, for symmetry no doubt, *Record American and Herald Traveler* in the afternoon. (The sabbath edition will be known as the *Sunday Herald Traveler and Sunday Advertiser*.) The new publisher, Harold G. Kern, seized the opportunity to wax eloquent on how the new combo would provide New England with "the most complete, most readable, and most responsible newspapers this area has ever enjoyed."

## Corrections

When we started (MORE) eleven issues ago, we promised to devote this final Hellbox item to the systematic correction of our own mistakes. "Traditionally," we wrote at the time, "newspapers, magazines and television stations have been reluctant to run corrections for fear of losing credibility with their readers and viewers. But a system of self-correction, of course, would have just the opposite effect, conceding (to no one's shame) that journalism even at its finest is an inexact art. Equally important, a regular process of correction . . . would make reporters and editors far more accountable than they now are and help put an end to much of the sloppy journalism that pervades the press."

There has not exactly been a pell-mell rush in the media to establish fixed, highly visible correction boxes. But at least *The New York Times* has now come along. Until several weeks ago, *Times* policy (if that is the word) called for the running of corrections in easily overlooked nooks and crannies of the paper under the type of headline usually reserved for fillers. Now, managing editor A.M. Rosenthal has instructed that corrections appear regularly under a bold, boxed headline at the end of the index on the second front page. And if the correction requires more space than that portion of the index permits, it will be keyed to another page in the paper and run there at length. The rest of the media, please copy.



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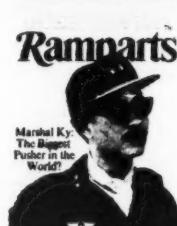
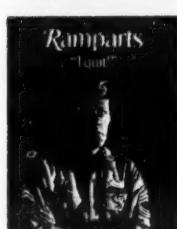
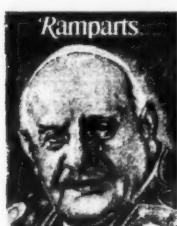
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- In 1964, when the FBI and other investigating agencies were unable to bring the killers to justice our reporters recreated the brutal murders of three civil rights workers in a lonely Mississippi field.
- In 1965, as waves of American troops and napalm were washing over the Vietnam countryside, we editorialized in behalf of an NLF victory, documented the horrible mutilations suffered by the children of Vietnam, and tried to give aid and comfort to the militant anti-war movement here at home.
- In 1966, as the Great Debate was beginning over whether or not the U.S. should be in Vietnam, Ramparts showed that it was already a fait accompli: the CIA, the semi-official Vietnam Lobby, and universities like Michigan State having conspired to get us involved there long since.
- In 1967, Ramparts printed an exposé on the CIA which if it didn't shake the Johnson administration at least caused it to tremble perceptibly. We showed how the Agency had subverted the National Student Association and kindred institutions and reached into almost every other aspect of American life as well.
- And in 1968, we described the way that US agents had directed the manhunt leading to the capture and execution of Che Guevara, and one of our editors brought home from Cuba the authoritative version of the Guevara Diaries.

We have, in other words, marked our coming of age by crisis in American history. We are 10 years old now, and still raising hell with those out to destroy America. This year, for instance, while the President and Congress were filling the air with confusing and misinformed talk about heroin, we showed how the epidemic now afflicting this country was due directly to the opium trade cultivated in Southeast Asia by the CIA, South Vietnam vice-president Ky, and other symbols of the US presence there.

Like any 10 year old, we are proud of ourselves. If a magazine's job is to change things, however, we've probably failed, for there's no denying that the 70s are proving as tragic as the 60s. But if journalism is supposed to shake up the powers that be, then Ramparts has done its part. "A gadfly to the establishment"—this is what the New York Times called us. The trouble is that a gadfly doesn't sting hard enough. We prefer to think of the magazine as part of the movement for social change that will some day turn things around in this country.

But whatever we are at the ripe old age of 10, growing up to be an important journalistic voice, having an impact on the times, hasn't been easy. The national advertisers who subsidize most magazines have found our stories too controversial. For a time in our brief career we relied

on financial sugar-daddies to keep the presses rolling. But we found that when we weren't spending our time holding these investors hands, we were getting into unusual positions to extract their daggers from our backs. They tried to control what we said about certain important issues—specifically the Arab-Israeli war of 1967, the black liberation movement, and the aftermath of the Kent State murders. Finally, we had to scrape together enough money to buy Ramparts for ourselves. Now we are the only staff-owned national magazine in America.

This independence is crucial: on top of the rest of this society's problem is the question of whether there will still be a "free press" and diversity of opinion by the end of the 70s.

In a time when magazines like Look have been dying or being gobbled up by conglomerates (Psychology Today by Boise Cascade, for example) and when Nixon, Agnew and Their Gang have been seizing on excuses to assault this diminished press, Ramparts has kept the faith. If we have our way, we'll keep it for another 10 years as well.

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**Will Earl Caldwell Go to Jail?**

BY FRED P. GRAHAM

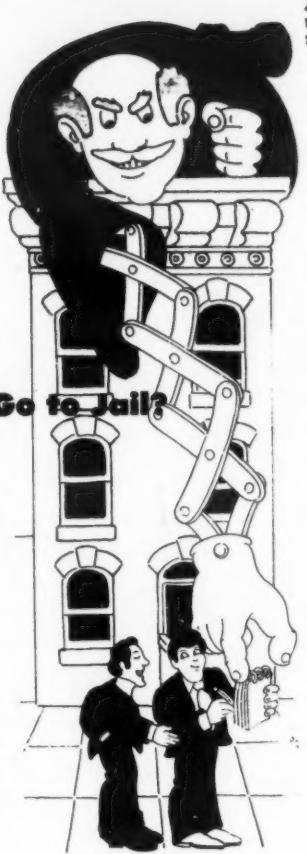
On Monday, June 19, comes our new late issue. Chief Justice Warren E. Burger will end his life while head toward one of his colleagues behind the Supreme Court bench (or, less likely, he will designate himself) and will say: "The judgment and opinion of the Court in number seventy-five, *United States versus Caldwell*, will be announced by Justice —".

Predicting that, or any Supreme Court decision, is a hazardous business. But Richard Nixon has packed the Supreme Court carefully according to his conservative tastes, and those who were most worried when the Caldwell case was argued last February can sleep easy with the impression that the Burger Court would decide it in a way that journalists would like. Reporters invariably suck wind when they hear this, because Caldwell, *The New York Times* reporter who told Attorney General John Mitchell that he was about to release a secret grand jury report, may become the press' symbol of resistance to subpoenas. His victories in the lower courts have stiffened journalists' backbones—and those of sources across the country. Now the prospect that those lower court decisions may well be contradicted in the fumbling parlance of the First Amendment, a chilling one for reporters.

The fact is, though, that Earl Caldwell's case is only the most extreme element of a long development that has come to be known as the "Caldwell principle." It is the principle that First Amendment press protection comes from compelled testimony that damages their capacity to gather news. There are peculiarities about his case that make it one of the most extreme applications of the doctrine. And so it is entirely possible that the Supreme Court could rule against him and in favor of the subpoenas, a privilege that would amount to a revolution in First Amendment rights. This is possible because two other cases raising the "Caldwell principle" will be decided along with his. Some Court-watchers believe that out of these rulings could emerge a broader First Amendment statement's protection of journalists' sources. In fact, the Supreme Court has done this for five years ago. What has happened is that Earl Caldwell has asked the Supreme Court to recognize a new Constitutional right, and at the same time to extend the rule to its logical extreme. For the Supreme Court, that is the most interesting forward with blinding speed, and for a Court that is straining to get into reverse on many issues, the prospects for success are not good.

To appreciate Caldwell's position, it is instructive to consider

(continued on page 14)



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